

January 1984

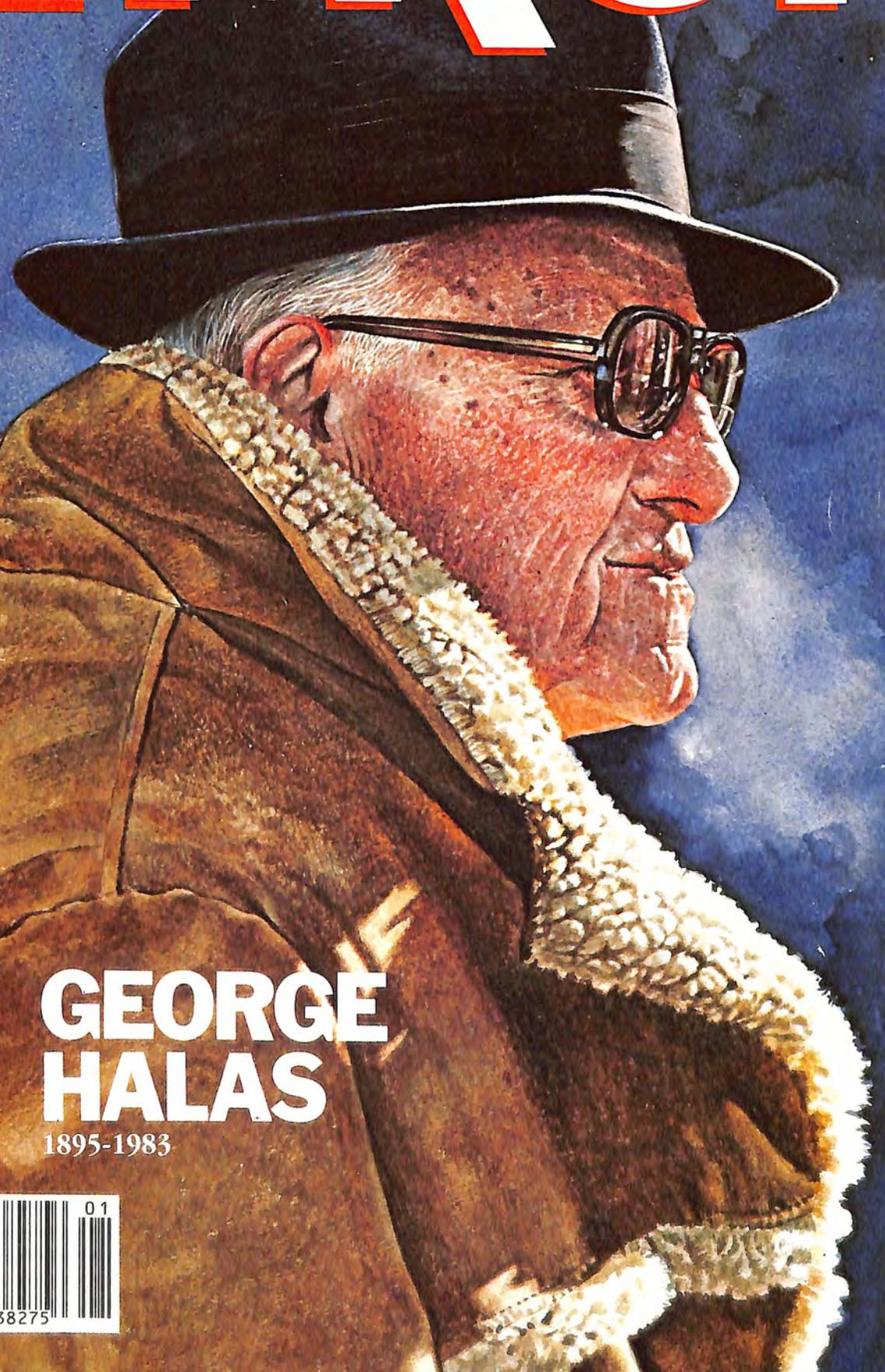
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**PRO!**



The Magazine of the  
National Football League

**PRO!**



# GEORGE HALAS

1895-1983





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# PRO!

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COVER PAINTING OF GEORGE HALAS BY MERV CORNING

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# PRO! DATA

## Behind the Editorial Scenes

PLAYS SCRATCHED OUT ON A CHALKBOARD, signals flashed in from the sideline, an audible at the line of scrimmage—they all boil down to the same thing: communication.



**Kevin Lamb**

In his story "Little Idle Chatter, No Small Talk," which begins on page 62, Kevin Lamb looks at coach-player and player-player communication before and during football games. An eight-year veteran on the Bears' beat with the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Lamb has an interesting perspective on communications between coaches and the media.

"Coaches seem to feel the pressure more today," he says, "but that hasn't created a trend in their interaction with the media. The way they react has more to do with their individual personalities.

"The one thing most of them seem to have in common is a lack of understanding for what we are doing. They need to understand that we don't see things in the terms of a bandwagon that we get on when they win and get off when they lose. When they win, we report they win; when they lose, we report they lose. Unfortunately, that makes many of them look at writers like injuries—something they don't like, but have to put up with."

One coach who could be irascible with the media, but still kept reporters' respect and admiration, was the late George Halas, who died at 88 on October 31. A tribute to Halas, who was an NFL founder, player, owner, and coach, begins on page 22. The author, Mickey Herskowitz of the *Houston Post*, has personal memories of Halas extending back a quarter of a century.



**Mickey Herskowitz** says, "Even then he seemed as ancient as Methuselah. And although Houston was in the hinterlands in regards to pro football at the time, Halas still dominated the scene. His energy was boundless, and he won

over everybody because he was so gracious and helpful."

That was the Halas that Herskowitz saw whenever he had any dealings with the Bears' owner. "Halas was in the middle of some severe medical problems when I interviewed him for the *PRO!* story," Herskowitz says. "But despite the pain he was in, he was totally to the other extreme of the way many people had pictured him. He was just so warm and generous and patient. It was a pleasure to be around him. I always felt that if anybody was going to live forever, he had the best shot."



**Vernon Biever**

Green Bay Packers since 1941, and has been the team's official photographer since 1957, Biever has shot many pictures for *PRO!* in recent years.

"The equipment today is very refined compared to what photographers used to have," Biever says. "When I started I used a Speed Graphic camera. I had to prefocus and then wait for the action to come to the camera. Then, I shot eight to ten pictures a game. Now, with two or three cameras and motor drives, I'll shoot about four hundred."

One other change Biever has seen is on the sidelines, where his son John (the assistant manager for the photo department of the *Milwaukee Journal*) has joined him. Like Vernon, John is one of a limited number of photographers who have shot all 18 Super Bowls. Like his father, John also has frequent assignments for *PRO!*.

"John shot Super Bowl I when he was in eighth grade," Vernon says. "We shot together for a number of years, but we don't as much anymore because I travel with the Packers and he has various other assignments for the *Journal*. He also does a lot of baseball. You know, John is a pretty good photographer."

Testimony to their talent can be found in photographs in this issue—John has photos in "Fading Back...But Not Out" (page 36) and both are represented in "Bomb Bay" (page 49).

# PRO!

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

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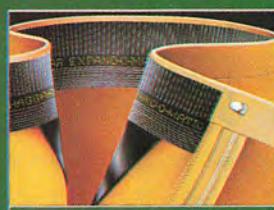
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# Totally Unpredictable

By Leigh Montville

THE VOTIVE LIGHT FLICKERED under the large oil portrait of Grantland Rice on the back wall. Three television monitors—tuned to cassette replays of three different pro football games—gave the room an added glow. The low-level cloud of cigar smoke completed the scene.

The man who runs the sports department of the newspaper was not happy.

"You know why you are here, don't you?" he asked.

"I know why I am here," I said.

On the desk in front of me were two newspaper clippings. One was topped by a headline that read "Montville's Pro Picks." The other was "NFL Results—Week Five." I knew we were not going to discuss the Pulitzer Prize committee's latest deliberations.

"You're a terrible pro football predictor," said the man who runs the sports department of the newspaper.

"Terrible," I agreed.

"The worst."

"Absolutely."

"An untrained hamster, bought at a chain store on a Thursday afternoon and placed upon a typewriter could do a better job."

"Definitely."

There are times to fight, and there are times to simply nod your head. This was a nodder. Fourteen pro football games. Fourteen picks. Fourteen losses. Jimmy The Greek was in no danger of losing his seat behind the CBS desk.

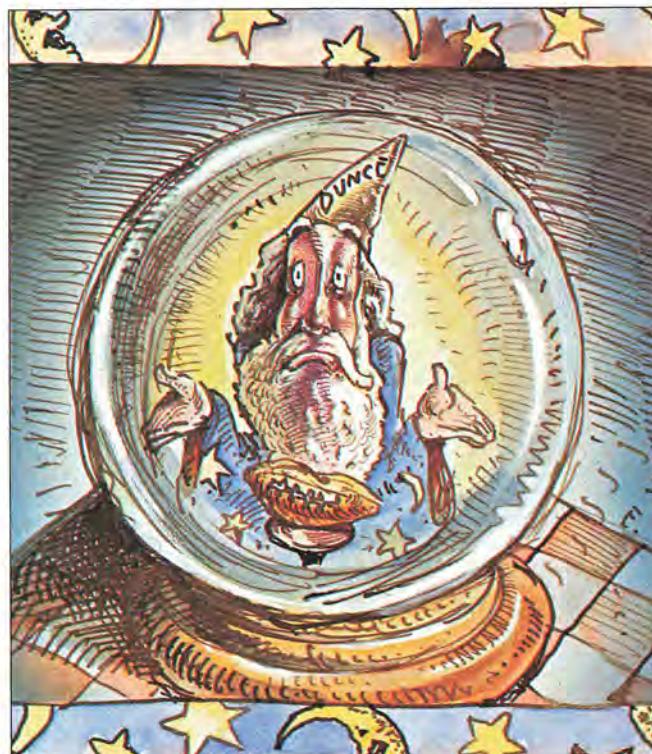
"You're simply not serious about this, are you?" said the man who runs the sports department of the newspaper.

"Not serious, no," I replied.

"Never have been, have you?"

"Never have been."

The 14-for-14 was bad enough—I still am planning to send it to researchers at the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio, to see if it is a record—but in-



cluded in the results was the score, Green Bay 55, Tampa Bay 14. I had picked the Tampa Bay Buccaneers to win Super Bowl XVIII at the beginning of the season. Tampa Bay now was 0-5.

"How'd you ever pick Tampa Bay?" asked the man who runs the sports department of the newspaper.

"How do I ever pick any of them?" I replied.

"Lousy."

"Right. Lousy."

I probably should have talked about the voice I hear, the feelings I feel, the vibes, but I did not think he wanted to hear about voices and feelings, and certainly not vibes. He did not seem to be in a vibes mood. Not at all. How to explain the process, anyway? I start to write and the image of a tangerine shirt comes into my mind. There's Hugh Green, tackling some running back so hard at the line of scrimmage that the fillings are loosened in the character's back molars. There's Lee Roy Selmon slamming some poor quarterback—looks like Joe Theismann—to the artificial turf. There's Doug Williams, throwing touchdown

pass after touchdown pass....

"You're so stupid, you probably didn't realize before the season began that Doug Williams doesn't even play for Tampa Bay anymore," said the man who runs the sports department of the newspaper.

"Probably didn't," I agreed.

"Every week you're worse. Look at the explanations you give for every score. They don't make sense. Not one of them. They're all foolish."

"Foolish."

"Like the writer."

"Yes, like the writer."

The sad part here was that he read my entire column. Out loud. All 14-for-14. He read it in a voice somewhere between Woody Allen and Woody Woodpecker. His observations in the middle were made in his natural voice. Woody Hayes.

*MINNESOTA 37, DALLAS 24—In this test of wills, give the nod to Steve Dils.*

*NEW ENGLAND 33, SAN FRANCISCO 13—Grogan takes a stroll over the team of Ed DeBartolo.*

*HOUSTON 17, PITTSBURGH 10—He uses his wits, he uses his wiles; you just can't beat that Eddie Biles.*

*RAIDERS 37, WASHINGTON 35—Help! Help! Save us! Save us! Do it for Al! Al Davis!*

"Who do you think you are, Edna St. Vincent Millay?" said the man who runs the sports department of the newspaper. "What are these rhymes?"

"I just start out that way," I said. "To set a certain tone."

"A deplorable tone."

"Deplorable. Yes."

*CINCINNATI 34, BALTIMORE 31—How much is Cris Collinsworth worth? Say that five times, fast as you can. Say Wilson Whitley whittles with me. Say....*

*ATLANTA 28, PHILADELPHIA 24—Game will be fabled battle of Skis, Bartkowski against Jaworski. Remember never to cross your skis. Not if you want to stay out of trouble.*

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PR 18

## Observations / Leigh Montville

MIAMI 17, NEW ORLEANS 7—Uwe, Uwe, baby, let me take you on a sea cruise!

DENVER 31, CHICAGO 14—Not a quarter of the Way, not a third of the Way, not half Way, not three quarters of the Way, not seven-eighths of the Way, but all the Way with El Way.

"What does all this stuff mean?" the man who runs the sports department of the newspaper asked. "You don't impart one solid bit of information to a pro grid fan."

"No, I probably don't. Not one bit," I replied.

"What's this Uwe-Uwe business? A joke?"

"A joke. A rock-and-roll lyric."

"Well, it's not funny."

"Not funny at all. Definitely not."

DETROIT 21, RAMS 10—Tough Lions D keys on Dickerson. Rotating zone baffles Vince Ferragamo. Billy Sims runs wild through porous Rams line.

ST. LOUIS 38, KANSAS CITY 14—Wily vet, Jim Hart, spots weakness in Chiefs' secondary that misses S Gary Barbaro.

GIANTS 41, SAN DIEGO 34—When will Chargers find a defense? Fouts still puts points on board, but so does the other team. More disappointment for Chargers here.

CLEVELAND 24, SEATTLE 9—Can't beat the Browns at home with that big crowd and the wind off the lake. Seahawks can't make transition from indoors to outdoors, West Coast to East.

"OK, now you're talking," the man who runs the sports department of the newspaper said. "There's some logic in these picks."

"Some definite logic."

"Except it's bad logic. Every one of these games turned out exactly opposite the way you predicted. This was terrible logic."

"Yes. Terrible logic."

BUFFALO 37, JETS 10—Every day, in every way, you can't beat a team with a coach named Kay.

TAMPA BAY 55, GREEN BAY 14—The Bucs are on a run, on a roll, on their way to the Super Bowl.

"There it is again," the man who runs the sports department of the newspaper said. "The rhymes. The nonsense. The awful predictions."

"A return to the original tone," I said.

"And Tampa Bay in the Super Bowl."

"Yes. Tampa Bay."

He said now that he did not know what he was going to do with me. I told him I also did not know what he was going to do with me.

For 10 years I have worked at the newspaper as a grid expert without developing any real grid expertise. To me, each game of grid is the toss of a coin. The more games I have predicted, the more I have decided that any team can beat any other team. I have become a believer in all of those official NFL parity stories.

I have no charts, no graphs, no little scribbles of minutiae on file cards. There are some predictors who know how every team has played on a Sunday game on natural turf on a rainy day, temperatures between 35 and 38, wearing white uniform shirts, coming off a three-point loss on Monday night. I can't even remember the names of three offensive linemen. In the entire league.

I always have thought that knowledge complicates vision. Foresight is gained through looking at Don Meredith tea leaves, not at grainy football films. Now I am not so sure.

"So what are we going to do about all this?" the man who runs the sports department of the newspaper asked. "Do you have any ideas?"

"I am going to become serious," I said. "I realize this is my job and I'm going to do it as well as I can."

"And?"

"I'm going to learn stats. Figures. I am going to know everything there is to know, helmet sizes to shoe sizes, times for the forty-yard dash to the number of lights in the megaboard in the end zones."

"And?"

"I'm starting right now. No more fourteen-for-fourteens in this newspaper. Ever."

I remember leaving the office, feeling as if I had been given \$40 and a new suit of clothes. I still had my job. I had my second chance. I would not fumble the crystal ball this time. I wouldn't make one wrong prediction for the rest of the year.

"Congratulations," said the secretary to the man who runs the sports department of the newspaper. "It looks like you survived."

"Hey, you can't stop trains, you can't stop trucks," I said. "You can't stop a man who picked the Tampa Bay Bucs."

All I needed now were a few good bounces of the football.

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# Mr. Fixit

HE ANSWERED ON THE third ring, even though he had been asleep. Saturday nights, his radar was tuned pretty fine.

He blinked at his alarm clock as he picked up the phone.

It was 2:15.

"Yeah?"

"Frank?"

"Yeah, who's this?"

"Corcoran." Corcoran was a rookie tackle.

"What's wrong?" the trainer asked.

"I can't sleep, Frank...I tried, but I just can't get to sleep. If I don't get some sleep, I'm gonna be terrible for the game." Besides being a rookie, Corcoran was a starter.

The trainer sat up, dropping his feet to the floor. He tried to rub sleep out of his eyes and will alertness into his voice.

"Is your roommate keeping you awake...is he snoring?"

"Naw, he's real quiet. I'm just kind of edgy, you know?" Corcoran would be going against an all-pro pass-rusher that afternoon.

"Well..." The trainer tried to keep from showing in his voice that he was upset at having been awakened. He knew he'd have trouble getting back to sleep.

"You got a book?" he asked.

"No, not with me."

"Well, just put on the television...don't turn the sound up...just watch a picture. Watch, and kind of let yourself go. Don't think about if you're going to sleep or not. Pretty soon, you'll relax."

The rookie sounded doubtful.

"But what'll I do if that don't work?"

The trainer sighed. "I dunno...I guess, come down and talk to me. But try the television first, okay? I don't know if I can stay awake to talk to you."

The trainer ate breakfast at 7 in the morning. He didn't eat much—a dab of scrambled eggs, two strips of bacon, and a slice of toast with honey.

A running back who had turned his ankle in final drills on Friday came into



the pregame meal room, his walk an exaggerated limp.

Before the running back could say anything, the trainer was on his feet, a napkin in one hand and a fork in the other.

"Don't walk like that!" he snapped. "I know it hurts...I know that. It's still swollen, you got pain, and your motion's limited."

The running back rolled his lip out into a pout.

"I know all that!" The trainer pointed at the player with his fork.

"What'd I tell you about walking?" the trainer demanded.

"Natural," the back whined. "You said, walk natural."

"Well, that ain't natural! You come in here limpin' like you got a forty-five round in your foot. You limp like that, you're gonna put strain on other muscles and really screw yourself up."

The trainer pantomimed the way he wanted the back to walk...looking a little like a race walker in slow motion.

"Deliberate...slow...but use your normal striding-motion."

The back nodded. "I'll try," he said.

"Do it...don't try, do it!"

"Can you tape it so I can play today?" the back asked.

"Only way you're playing is in an emergency...an extreme emergency," he said. The back started to shuffle off toward the buffet line.

"Walk natural!"

A tight end with the flu entered the dining room.

"Should I eat anything?" he asked the trainer.

"Are you hungry?"

"Not really...but I thought maybe I should eat something."

"Dry toast, and some tea," the trainer answered. "Check with me when we get to the locker room...if you're feelin' better, you can have a candy bar."

He drove from the team hotel to the stadium. A lot of players' cars passed his on the expressway, heading downtown...the players grinned and honked. He kept in a slow lane, steady at fifty. He used the drive downtown as a time to relax and sort his thoughts.

In the dressing room, a wide receiver who wouldn't play that day because of a pull sought him out.

"I don't need to dress, do I?" asked the receiver.

"Dress," the trainer said.

"But I can't go...I'll just be doin' the clipboard. Why don't I just wear a warm-up jacket, or sweats?"

The trainer cleaned his ear with a cotton swab on a stick.

"They know you're hurt," he said referring to their opponents, "but they don't know for sure, how bad. If they see you in sweats, they're sure. If you're suited, they've still got to wonder. Let's let 'em wonder."

One of the safetymen was recovering from a broken bone in his foot. The trainer spent 10 painstaking minutes building what amounted to a walking-cast, using artfully placed strips of tape.

His last tape job was on a linebacker whose knee was a little shaky.

"You feel anything," the trainer said, "you tell me. Anything!" The linebacker was the kind who would have played with an arrow through his knee.

The linebacker slid off the table, grabbing the trainer's arm for just an instant.

"Thanks, Frankie...you're my man."

Everybody else's, too.

PRO



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spray cologne,  
after shave.



# PEOPLE

By Larry Eldridge, Jr., and Beau Riffenburgh

## The Cowboys' Twelfth Man

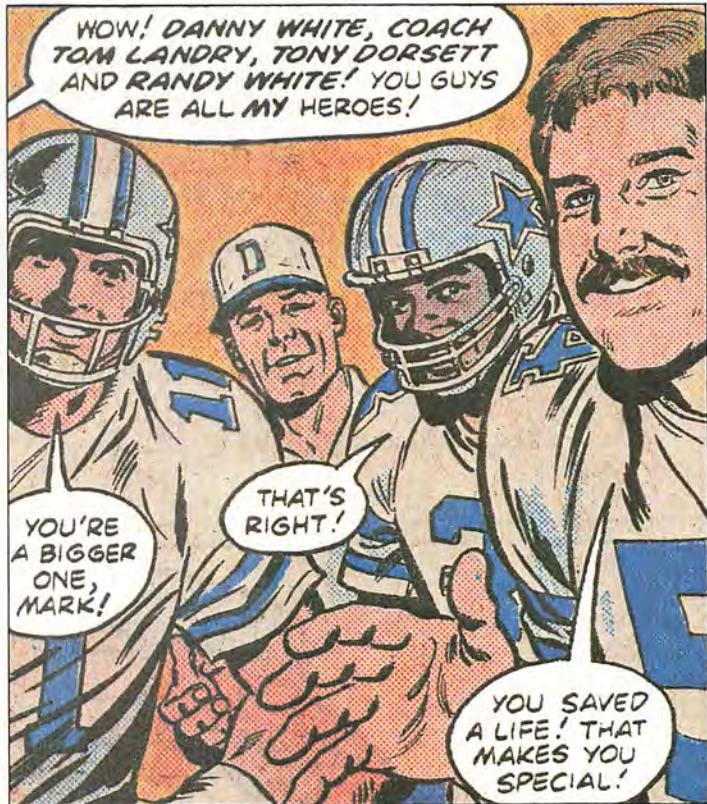
THE DALLAS COWBOYS and the Spider have gone into action on the field again. Not Carl (Spider) Lockhart, the Dallas native who played defensive back so well for 11 seasons with the New York Giants. Rather, the real Spider-Man.

As part of a September promotion by Marvel Comics, a special edition of the Spider-Man comic book appeared as an insert in the *Dallas Times Herald*. In the story, titled "Danger in Dallas," Spider-Man joins forces with the Dallas Cowboys to stop the evil Ringmaster. And, as they so often do on the field, the Cowboys (with a little help from Spider-Man)



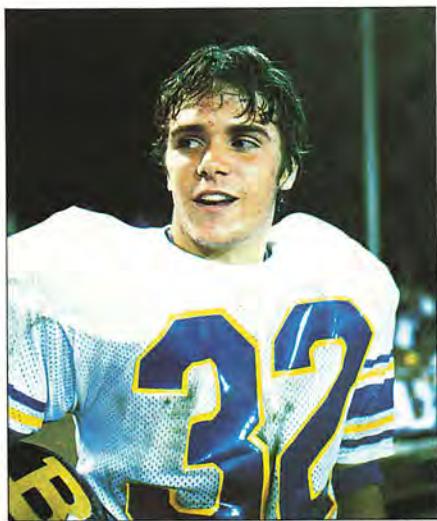
*Spider-Man makes a leaping catch (above). The Dallas Cowboys join with Spider-Man as America's Heroes (right), in a comic book feature.*

make it exciting...but come out on top in the end.



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## Spitting Image



*Chuck Knox—rerun version—might be future material for Chuck Knox—original version.*

CHUCK M. KNOX UNDOUBTEDLY HAS spent much of his sporting life in the shadow of his immensely successful

father, the coach of the Seattle Seahawks.

But Chuck R. Knox (the coach) soon

might have to live up to his son's reputation. The younger Knox, an 18-year-old senior at Bellevue High School, is perhaps the best player on one of the best teams in Washington.

Halfway through the 1983 season, Bellevue had a 5-0 record and the number-seven ranking in Washington state. Knox, a wingback, was the leading rusher, averaging more than 10 yards a carry. Knox's best performance came in a 32-7 victory over Sammamish High School, when he ran for 280 yards and three touchdowns on only 14 carries. He also had more than 100 yards rushing called back due to penalties.

Knox, who is 6 feet, 190 pounds, has been contacted by more than 30 colleges, and is leaning toward Arizona State, Miami, or Washington.

"My Dad gives me a lot of tips," the younger Knox says. "When I come home after a game, he talks to me and gives me his evaluation of my perfor-

## PEOPLE

mance. He's helped me with a lot of different aspects of the game."

Has coach Chuck helped player

Chuck's team with any suggestions? "Nah," the younger Knox says. "That's what we have our own coaches for."



Retiring center-bodyguard Dan Dierdorf—long in the tooth in more ways than one.

### But Who Guards Little Dan?

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS CENTER DAN Dierdorf only recently announced his retirement, effective at the end of the season, but the 12-year veteran from Michigan already might have his eye on a post-football profession.

Dierdorf might just want to stay in front of the camera after making a splash recently with two commercials for a St. Louis-based soft drink named Vess. The commercials have run throughout Missouri.

One commercial is a take-off on Mean Joe Greene's award-winning effort for

Coca-Cola a couple years ago. Dierdorf sits down in the tunnel with a Vess cola after a hard game. When he is complimented by a young fan, Dierdorf offers him his jersey, only to have the kid reply that he'd rather have the Vess.

Dierdorf is joined by St. Louis baseball Cardinals shortstop Ozzie Smith in another commercial. The two stop off for a Vess, and when the waitress returns with the drinks, she says, with a knowing look, "You're Ozzie Smith." Then, turning to Dierdorf, she adds, "And you...you must be his bodyguard."

### King of San Diego

"THE KING" MEANS DIFFERENT THINGS TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE. To football fans, the term usually brings to mind Pro Football Hall of Famer Hugh McElhenny; to music buffs, Elvis Presley.

San Diego Chargers linebacker Linden King, however, has it in his sights to be the king in both football and music. King, a sixth-year veteran from Colorado State (where he was a music major), is a budding performer on stage.

"My music is kind of a crossover between Kenny Rankin and Kenny Rogers" says King, who until recently was performing with teammate Kellen Winslow.

Now King is a solo act, and doing just fine. He has become a popular performer in the San Diego area. He has appeared on the Mike Douglas Show, and has hooked up with entertainer John Ford Coley, who serves as his mentor-manager.

"The response I get from most people is, 'Oh, you can't do it,'" King says. "But you take all the people doing it, and they were told the same thing. You've got to believe in yourself and go for it."



King does a solo.

## Notables

**SUPER VERSATILITY**—Los Angeles Raiders head coach **Tom Flores** has a distinction that might not be duplicated very often. He is the only man to have earned a Super Bowl ring as a player (with Kansas City in Game IV), as an assistant coach (with the Oakland Raiders in Game XI), and as a head coach (with the Raiders in Game XV).

**NOT-SO-MEAN REGENT**—**Joe Greene**, the Steelers' former all-pro defensive tackle, has been appointed to the North Texas State University Board of Regents. He was nominated for the position at his alma mater by Texas Governor Mark White.

**IS THERE A FINDER'S FEE?**—Buffalo head coach **Kay Stephenson**, Atlanta head coach **Dan Henning**, and Washington assistant coach **Don Breaux** have something in common: They all were signed as free-agent quarterbacks for the AFL San Diego Chargers in the mid-1960s by **Al LoCasale**, now executive assistant with the Los Angeles Raiders. Each man also got his feet wet in coaching by tutoring under former Chargers, Rams, and Oilers head coach **Sid Gillman**. According to LoCasale Breaux is ripe for a head coaching job, and may soon join Henning and Stephenson as a head man.

**FOOTBALL AWEIGH**—File the name of **Eddie Meyers** away. In 1987, five years after his graduation from the U.S. Naval Academy, Meyers will report to the Atlanta training camp looking for a job. The Falcons signed Meyers as a free agent, hoping that his five-year service commitment won't seriously erode the skills that helped Meyers set Navy records for most yards rushing in a game (298), season (1,318), and career (2,935). "I don't think it's such a longshot," Meyers says.

**ROLE MODEL**—The NFL's most successful alumnus from Annapolis, of course, was former Heisman Trophy winner **Roger Staubach**, who has been named "Man of the Year" by the Walter Camp Football Foundation. Staubach, the NFL's all-time passing leader who played in five Super Bowls with the Dallas Cowboys, will receive the award at the annual All-America dinner at Yale on February 4.

**HIGH FLYER**—The success of Green Bay's kick blocker extraordinaire, 6-foot 5-inch **Gary Lewis**, may inspire some new thinking in special teams strategy. Lewis waits behind the defensive line, waits for it to block down on the offensive line, then soars as high as he can, timing his leap to the kick. He also times his psych maneuvers. "To me, kickers are not real stable people," he says. "If they get into a rhythm, they're good. But when you get one block on them, it does something to them the next time they line up. It becomes a burden on them. So I talk to the kicker a little bit."

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© 1983 Volkswagen of America Seatbelts save lives. \*Mfr's sugg. retail price includes a 12-month unlimited mileage, limited warranty. Transp., tax, license, dealer prep add'l.



# Best, Baddest Backers

*The Class of Pro Football's Hard Hitters*

By Bob Oates, Sr.

IT WAS JUST ANOTHER FOOTBALL game for Les Richter, the top linebacker in the history of the Los Angeles Rams, who have had many stars at his position. Richter's coaches, disappointed with their offensive line, moved him to right guard that day in Detroit in 1961. They kept him at linebacker, too, of course, and lined him up, as usual, at center on special teams. In a brilliant 59-minute performance, Richter excelled all three ways.

After 38 years of pro football on the West Coast—well over half the duration of the 64-year-old National Football League—Richter remains the foremost team player ever in Los Angeles, as well as the finest of those who have backed up western lines. He clearly belongs in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. He'll make it someday.

AS A LINEBACKER, WHERE DOES RICHTER rank nationally? In ability, including the mental intangibles, he is one of the five best I've seen. Here are the top 10 linebackers of all time:

1. Dick Butkus, 1965-1973, Chicago Bears. Best defensive player ever.
2. Joe Schmidt, 1953-1965, Detroit Lions. Magnificent, mobile leader.
3. Jack Lambert, 1974-present, Pittsburgh Steelers. Best active linebacker.
4. Les Richter, 1954-1962, Los Angeles Rams. Most tenacious leader.
5. Ted Hendricks, 1969-present, Baltimore Colts, Green Bay Packers, Oakland and Los Angeles Raiders. Best outside linebacker.
6. Lawrence Taylor, 1981-present, New York Giants. Could go higher.
7. Bobby Bell, 1963-1974, Kansas City Chiefs. Helped AFL reach respectability.
8. Willie Lanier, 1967-1977, Kansas City Chiefs. Chiefs had all-time best pair.
9. Ray Nitschke, 1958-1972, Green Bay Packers. Made a great team better.
10. Chuck Bednarik, 1949-1962, Philadelphia Eagles. Helped design the specifications for the position.

SINCE SPECIALIZATION TOOK ROOT in the 1960s, the NFL has been decorated by more standouts at linebacker than



**Dick Butkus, prototype middle linebacker.**

at any other position. This is a natural consequence of the importance of the position. Beginning in high school, most coaches put their best athletes at linebacker—unless, as every coach hopes, they have a gift for throwing the ball.

Thus it is no simple task to separate a best 10 from a best 20. For instance, there has been a place near the top for Tommy Nobis of Atlanta and Dave Wilcox of San Francisco, not to mention Dallas's Chuck Howley, who was the most valuable player in Super Bowl V.

Dave Robinson of Green Bay, Mike Curtis of Baltimore, and two Rams, Don Paul and Tank Younger, are top 20 material, if not top 10.

MOST OF THE GREAT ONES OVER recent decades have played middle linebacker, which is one of football's newest positions. Before 1950, there was no such character on the football stage. There were backs, linemen, and ends in the early decades; but the only linebackers were two-way fullbacks and centers who doubled as outside linebackers.

As a position, middle linebacker evolved out of middle guard—the central figure in the old five-man lines. One of the first to line up as a middle linebacker in the modern sense was LaVern Torgeson of Detroit, who had come up as a center in the 1950s. Against the run, the Lions wanted 320-pound Les Bingaman in their lineup at middle guard. In

key passing situations, they pulled Bingaman and replaced him with Torgeson, who stood up as one of three linebackers behind four down linemen, making a 4-3 alignment.

By the middle 1960s, middle linebacker, as a position, had been refined and improved enough to attract the great specialists, the greatest of whom was, and is, Dick Butkus. For years, Butkus dominated opponents to a degree unknown before him and unmatched since.

Joe Schmidt, one of the two best linebackers I've seen, played most of his career a few years before Butkus, at a time when media romantics were just beginning to distinguish between linemen and linebackers, glamorizing the latter.

The three other most prominent linebackers in Schmidt's peak seasons were Sam Huff of the New York Giants, Bill George of the Chicago Bears, and Richter—three stars in three main media centers. But as distributors of sports publicity, New York and Chicago always have outdistanced Los Angeles.

So it is that of the four great linebackers of 1960 (perhaps the key year in the history of linebacking), only three are in the Hall of Fame: Schmidt, George, and Huff. Richter's omission is profoundly unjust.

Football as a game, and linebacker as a position, have continued to evolve explosively since that year, bringing in, among other things, a fourth linebacker recently. This man has become the second middle linebacker in most defenses of the 1980s.

Thus, the best active linebackers—Jack Lambert, Ted Hendricks, Lawrence Taylor, Hugh Green, and their peers—are playing a different game from the one any linebacker of the 1950s knew.

Could the old-timers have adjusted? Would Butkus, were he active today, still be considered number one? I think so. Lambert provides a case lesson in how great athletes adjust. Having come to fame in the 4-3 alignment, the Pittsburgh star has been equally impressive in 3-4 defenses.

In any era, the great old pros would have been great young pros.

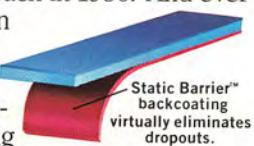
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*They Grew Together, George Halas  
and the NFL, Through 64 Seasons*  
By Mickey Herskowitz

# Papa



*George Halas, addressing his 1946 NFL champions, always seemed to be the center of attention on a football field.*

*George Halas, patriarch of pro football, died on October 31, 1983, in Chicago at age 88 after a lengthy illness. He was born in Chicago in 1895, and, 25 years later, as a young athlete and entrepreneur, helped found the organization that two years later became the National Football League. He lived with his remarkable legacy for 64 seasons.*

**A** Chicago writer was talking one day about George Halas, as Chicago writers often did when they were not talking about Mayor Daley or Al Capone or Mrs. O'Leary's cow.

"I have always gotten along well with Halas," the writer said proudly. "He has never been uncivil to me."

To what, we inquired, did he owe this astonishing relationship?

"Mostly," he said, "to the fact that I cover baseball. I've had

no reason to criticize him. But I wouldn't have anyway. How can you criticize someone who has done what Halas has for pro football?"

Now that was a rather pretty sentiment, coming as it did from a writer who had put the lash to such well-known sportsmen as Phil Wrigley and Leo Durocher. In truth, Halas was no virgin when it came to criticism. But he had a great thing going for him. He outlived most of his critics. He was the last witness to the events that shaped the colossal pastime that is now professional football. He was, in short, a living encyclopedia. He had lived it all.

Eight years ago, when it came time to celebrate the American Bicentennial, Halas's figure stood especially tall. He was pro football's closest link to 200 years of the American character. If he didn't actually sign the Declaration of Independence, it probably was because the Staley Starchmakers, also

# Bear

known as the Staleys, were working out twice that day.

Halas's teams, of course, were the first to practice daily. By the time others had copied him, he had introduced his players to a form of penitence known as two-a-days. By then he had moved the team from Decatur to Chicago, having been *given* the franchise by the man who owned the starch-works.

You got a whiff of another era, another world, of gaslights and high collars and cobblestone streets, when Halas recalled those times:

"In Chicago we used the Logan Square baseball park. With a morning and afternoon practice a lunch break was necessary. So every day I had a box lunch prepared—a sandwich, a couple of apples, and, at noon, a milkman in a horse-drawn rig would stop by and leave bottles of milk. The sandwich was maybe a dime, the apples a nickel, the milk another dime."

That was 63 years ago, and in all the years since, it is safe to guess, no owner or coach ever got more for a quarter, or more from his players, than George Halas.

*Irascible, wily, flinty*, these were the words so often used to describe him. Yet you looked at Halas and the words didn't fit the bar of music. With age, he came to resemble Barry Fitzgerald, the kindly, flustered Irish priest of so many movies.

Now that comparison is almost certain to bring howls of protest from all those who ever suffered the famed Halas temper, those who—unlike our friend the baseball writer—had to write about the Bears every day. Halas was called cheap and cold and puritanical, and he never minced his thoughts.

Once a barber asked him how he wanted his hair trimmed. "Silently," he said.

But we prefer the view of Mike Royko, the Chicago writer, who argued: "If he is as bad as people say, why hasn't he been elected to public office?"

The bald truth was that he couldn't have survived all those years by being a piece of sponge cake.

Surface impressions are easy and fleeting. What counts is the long sweep of time, and the verdict of those who get up close. In 1968, the New York Football Writers gave Halas a plaque. The inscription said it was for long and meritorious service to pro football. It was nothing, really. Just half a century of blood and sweat, of unflagging effort, of one-track devotion to a game he helped create. Halas blew up the first ball.

In his later years he had reached the point where, as his contemporary Casey Stengel once put it, a lot of his friends weren't breathing anymore. He was—and had been for years—the last of that little group of men who sat on the running boards in Ralph Hay's showroom in Canton, Ohio, and invented what was to become the National Football League.

The date was September 17, 1920. It was indeed fortunate that the cars of that time were equipped with running boards, because Hay's showroom had only two chairs. "We all found



Halas, at 25, was an end and coach on his 1920 team.

seats," Halas said, "and in something like ten minutes we organized the league and elected Jim Thorpe president."

They also announced that each club had paid a membership fee of \$100. That was strictly public relations hype. "We intended," Halas said, "to give our new organization a façade of financial stability. I can assure you that no money changed hands."

The descendants of two of the eleven original franchises survive today: the Chicago (now St. Louis) Cardinals, and the Staley Starchmarkers of Decatur, who became the Chicago Bears in 1921.

Under Halas, the Bears were the most personalized of teams, owned and coached by one man, a dual role he held for exactly 40 years. He was a jealous custodian, coming out of retirement three times to return to coaching. In the early years he was also the right end, captain, press agent, ticket seller, trainer, groundskeeper, and general factotum.

He wrote out all the publicity releases, in longhand, and trotted them around to the newspapers. As executive pressures increased, he passed on the job to the team's quarterback, compensating him with an extra \$25 a week. "He was worth every penny of it," Halas said.

If this doesn't exactly give you a sense of the growth of pro football, at least it tells you what has happened to the newspaper business. "There were seven or eight dailies in Chicago then," said Halas, "so eventually I hired a sports-writer off one of the papers to do the work. The first eight-column streamer the Bears ever got was in the *Tribune* in mid-season, 1925. I was overwhelmed at the attention and was effusive in my thanks to Don Maxwell, at that time the sports



*Halas (above, left) and assistant Laurie Walquist in 1933. Halas coached the Bears to five NFL titles, including one in 1940 (below) when Chicago beat Washington 73-0. Halas (above, right) on the sideline in 1967, his last year as a coach.*





editor. But Maxwell shut me off with, 'I did it for the paper, not the Bears. Monday morning is a dead, dull day for sports news. The Bears simply provided us with a change of pace.'

For the most part, Halas described the newspapers' attitude toward pro football as one of tolerance. 'I was always greeted cordially,' he said. 'They listened attentively, or at least politely, then tossed our stuff into the waste basket. We hopefully looked for some mention every day—and, boy, did we cheer when we found one.'

To wander through the decades with Halas was to stroll in lush, tropical gardens. There was a neatness, darned near a geometry, to his career. His 40 years as head coach of the Bears break down into four separate, 10-year terms: 1920-29, 1933-1942, 1946-1955, 1958-1967.

And that is the obvious and clearest way to retell the story of Papa Bear. (Of course, as the dying sinner said to the priest when he made his last confession, we only have time for the high spots.)

In the spring of 1920, Halas toured midwestern campuses, recruiting players with a package offer that included a year-round job at the Staley starchworks and a share of the gate receipts from the team's games. While fishing for opponents among other factory and town teams, he suggested to Ralph Hay, the Canton car dealer, that a league be formed. And so it began.

It was a brute of a game they played, typified by a Staley lineman named George Trafton. In a game against Rock Island, Trafton tackled a halfback named Fred Chicken—so help us, Fred Chicken—so hard that he was slammed into the stands, breaking a leg.

The crowd turned ugly, with Trafton being the target of numerous threats. After the game, the Staleys' trainer slipped a sweatshirt over Trafton's head to conceal his number. Halas watched with admiration as Trafton, arms pumping, ran down the highway in the direction of the city line, a Rock Island mob fading in his wake.

The next time the teams met, Halas shrewdly handed Traf-

ton an envelope containing their share of the gate receipts. 'Do me a favor, George,' he said, 'keep this for me until we get back to the hotel.'

Halas: 'If the Rock Island fans started looking for trouble, Trafton would be running for his life, whereas I would have nothing to run for except the money.'

In 1925, pro football took its first giant step toward respectability when Halas signed Red Grange on the day after Grange had played his last college game for Illinois. 'He was the product,' Halas once wrote, 'of an era which idolized its sports champions. And he had the champion's knack for turning in his greatest performances in the clutch.'

Grange had been delivered to the Bears by his manager, a wildly colorful entrepreneur named C.C. (Cash and Carry) Pyle. It was Pyle who arranged a two-month barnstorming tour that exposed Grange and the Bears in 20 games to crowds totaling more than 360,000. Splitting the proceeds with their star rookie halfback, the Bears cleared more than \$100,000 from the tour—their first real profit.

It was this kind of era: In Florida, where the land boom was aloft, an army of carpenters erected a 30,000-seat wooden stadium in Coral Gables, 48 hours before Grange and his teammates were to meet a squad of local all-stars. The next day, the stadium was torn down and the wood was used to build houses.

Halas had shared the coaching duties, and the team's ownership, with his quarterback, Dutch Sternaman. In 1930, they resolved a difference of opinion by bringing in a new coach, Ralph Jones, who introduced a new wrinkle: the T-formation with a man in motion.

Pro football was a trifle too insecure in 1933 to suit Ralph Jones, and he quit on a championship team. (The Bears had defeated Portsmouth in the 1932 title game, *indoors*, on a field 80 yards long, on a disputed touchdown pass from Bronko Nagurski to Red Grange.)

Between seasons, Halas bought out Sternaman, looked around for the best coach he could find, and hired himself. Helluva move. The Bears repeated in 1933, a goofy year featuring blocked punts, trick plays, Nagurski jump passes, and a tackle by Grange that saved them in the first playoff between divisional winners, over the Giants.

Vengeance was New York's in 1934. The Giants handed the Bears their first loss after 13 consecutive victories in the famous 'Sneakers Game.' The Giants donned tennis shoes at halftime, roared from behind on a frozen field, and thumped the Bears 30-13.

Yet that may have been the best of all Halas teams. After one victory, an elated Halas, in a rare burst of extravagance, treated the boys to a party at a posh Chicago restaurant.

Around midnight the manager stopped by Halas's table to ask if everything was satisfactory. Halas assured him it was, then asked, idly, how much of a bill his boys had run up.

'About eight hundred dollars,' the manager replied.

Instantly Halas leaped to his feet. 'Eight hundred dollars!' he cried. 'That's enough! Shut off the drinks! These men are athletes!'

Grange retired at the close of the 1934 season, and Halas noted sadly: 'It was the end of an era. Up to 1934, football had been essentially a running game. Thorpe was a runner. So were Grange, Feathers, Nagurski, Nevers, and Hinkle. Now, Arnie Herber and Don Hutson were warming up at Green Bay. An exciting new era dominated by great passers and receivers was at hand.'

Two changes in fairly quick succession cleared the way for the passing game. In Halas's own playing days, the ball

had measured a plump 23 inches around the middle.

By 1934 the ball had been slimmed down by an inch and a half. The year before, Halas had led the move to permit passing from anywhere behind the line of scrimmage, instead of five yards back. He also led efforts to move the goalposts to the front line of the end zone. Pro football was opening up like a sunflower.

In 1936, another landmark decision helped re-establish the sport's future. Bert Bell proposed a draft of college seniors, with teams selecting in the reverse order of their finish. Halas went along with the plan, as did all the owners, because the draft was a big, bold step toward achieving competitive balance. "It was good for the league," he said. "We voted that way once. I doubt that you could do that today."

Halas had been the first to work 12 months a year at football, the first to practice daily, to scout, to take game movies, to make a deal for a major player (Ed Healey, for \$100, from Rock Island). Now, in 1939, he became the first owner to trade a player for a first draft pick. The pick was Pittsburgh's, and he used it to acquire the passing quarterback he craved, Sid Luckman of Columbia.

With Luckman running the Chicago T, the Bears reached their dynastic peak in 1940, drowning the Washington Redskins 73-0 in that year's Championship Game. The Redskins trailed by only a touchdown when an end named Charlie Malone, wide open, dropped a pass from Sammy Baugh in the end zone.

Later, Baugh was asked whether the score might have been different, if that pass had been caught. "Yes," the taciturn Texan said. "It would have been 73-6."

The Bears repeated in 1941, the hard way, forcing the Packers into a playoff by defeating the Cardinals on the last day of the season. The date was December 7, 1941. The elated Chicago players trooped into the dressing room to learn the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor.

With the established players drifting off to war, to be replaced by the very young and the very old, the Bears won 11 games in a row in 1942, only to lose to Washington in the title game. Bronko Nagurski, five years retired, came out of legend to double at fullback and tackle. The Bears finished the season, however, without George Halas, who joined the navy.

As they say, in each life there is a summer (or winter) of '42.

**T**wo smart, instinctive moves by Halas helped the Bears make the postwar adjustment in 1946. First, he reminded the veterans that some would be rusty, and assured them that no one would be cut because of it. Then he waived all rules. No curfews. No bed checks. "You've had to take a lot of orders over the last few years," he said, "and you probably have had enough discipline and regimentation to last a lifetime—I know I have. So all rules are off. You're on your own. It's up to you individually to get in shape."

That demonstrated Halas's knack for knowing when, and how far, to push, when to lighten the reins.

Sid Luckman was the hero as the Bears won it all. He went in for one play on defense against the Rams, and intercepted a pass from Bob Waterfield. He carried the ball once against the Giants in the title game, and ran 19 yards for the winning touchdown. "Luckman," said Halas, "could do it all: pass, run, defend, think. He created the T-formation style of quarterbacking which has profoundly influenced football for the last quarter-century."

That was their fourth championship since Columbia Sid joined the team in 1939. And this one was a little special

because it would be the last one for 17 years for the Bears.

Over the next four seasons, the Bears compiled the best record in the NFL, yet finished second in the West each year. The Cleveland Browns had begun their domination of the league. For Halas, the rest of the decade was memorable largely for "the worst player deal of my life." For \$50,000 and two draft picks that didn't pan out, he sent a rookie quarterback named Bobby Layne to the New York Bulldogs (Layne later went to the Detroit Lions, where he directed three NFL championship teams).

In 1956, Halas stepped aside as coach in favor of an old crony, Paddy Driscoll. In Chicago, it was treated not as a retirement, but as an abdication. Now it was 1958 and time for another Halas comeback. This one would be his last hurrah.

In the past, the Bears had responded with instant titles—in 1933 and 1946—when Papa Bear returned to the coaching lines. But the game had changed. The era of free substitution had taken hold. Television riches were around the corner. And a new rival, the American Football League, was just around the corner.

But by 1963 the Bears had given Halas, at 68, his sixth championship season. They won it with Billy Wade at quarterback and a defense copied from the Giants, the team they beat 14-10 in the title game. The defense set up both touchdowns, on interceptions by Larry Morris and Ed O'Bradovich.

He would stay around long enough to coach Gale Sayers and Dick Butkus, but on May 27, 1968, Halas made his peace with the calendar. Tough-fibered as ever, but 73 and hurting, he retired for the fourth—and last—time.

A painful, arthritic hip forced him to that decision, a hip he had injured half a century before while playing right field in a brief career with the New York Yankees. At midseason of 1919 he was sent to the minors, and the job went to an obscure character named Babe Ruth. Halas had fond memories of that year, and of the day he hit two long drives off Walter Johnson.

"Walter Johnson was in his prime," Halas said. "What a fastball! Nobody ever threw a ball harder."

"But that day I hit two balls over the fence off him."

Halas actually hit two home runs off the great Walter Johnson?

He shook his head.

"No, I hit two balls over the fence, but they were this much foul."

He held his hands about a foot apart.

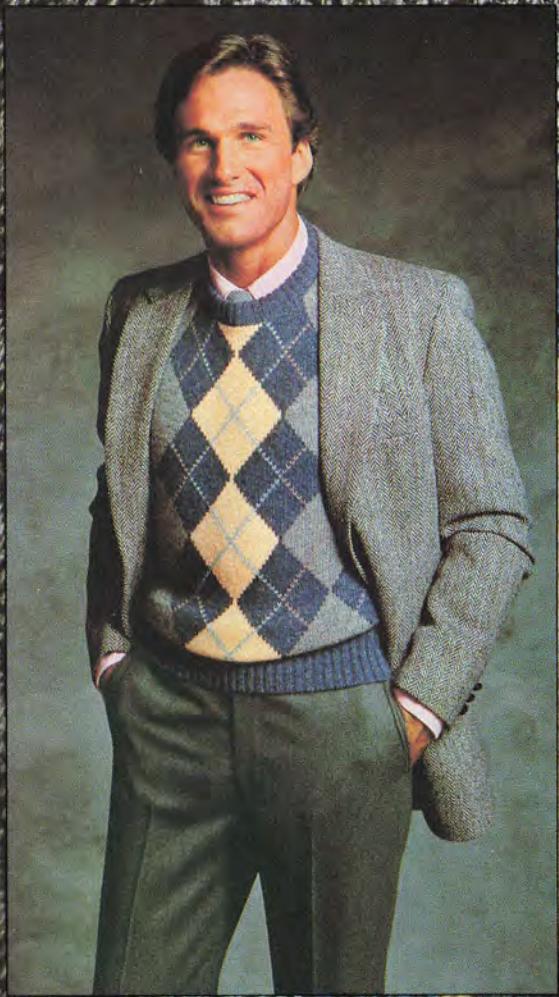
"But if they had been fair," Halas added, "they would have been home runs."

And that, admitted Halas, might have been his greatest thrill in sports.

George Halas was chairman of the board, a millionaire, a man who earned everything he got. He was the last of the pioneers. He helped deliver pro football from the sandlots to the super stadiums. His contributions to the sport are beyond measure.

Yet you *know* his soul was on the field. There was no humor in his farewell statement in 1968, but no one could miss the irony. Papa Bear, who had indeed prowled the sidelines like a restless bear, said he could no longer pursue the officials to argue his case. "I suppose," he said, "I began to realize this in one of our final games last season, when I started rushing after the referee who was pacing off a penalty, and it suddenly dawned on me that I was not gaining on him."

That had to be a sad, frustrating discovery for a man who, all his life, never lost ground.



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# THE ROAD WARRIOR

*Linebacker Ted Hendricks Still Is a Driving Force in the Raiders' Defense*

*By Ted Brock*

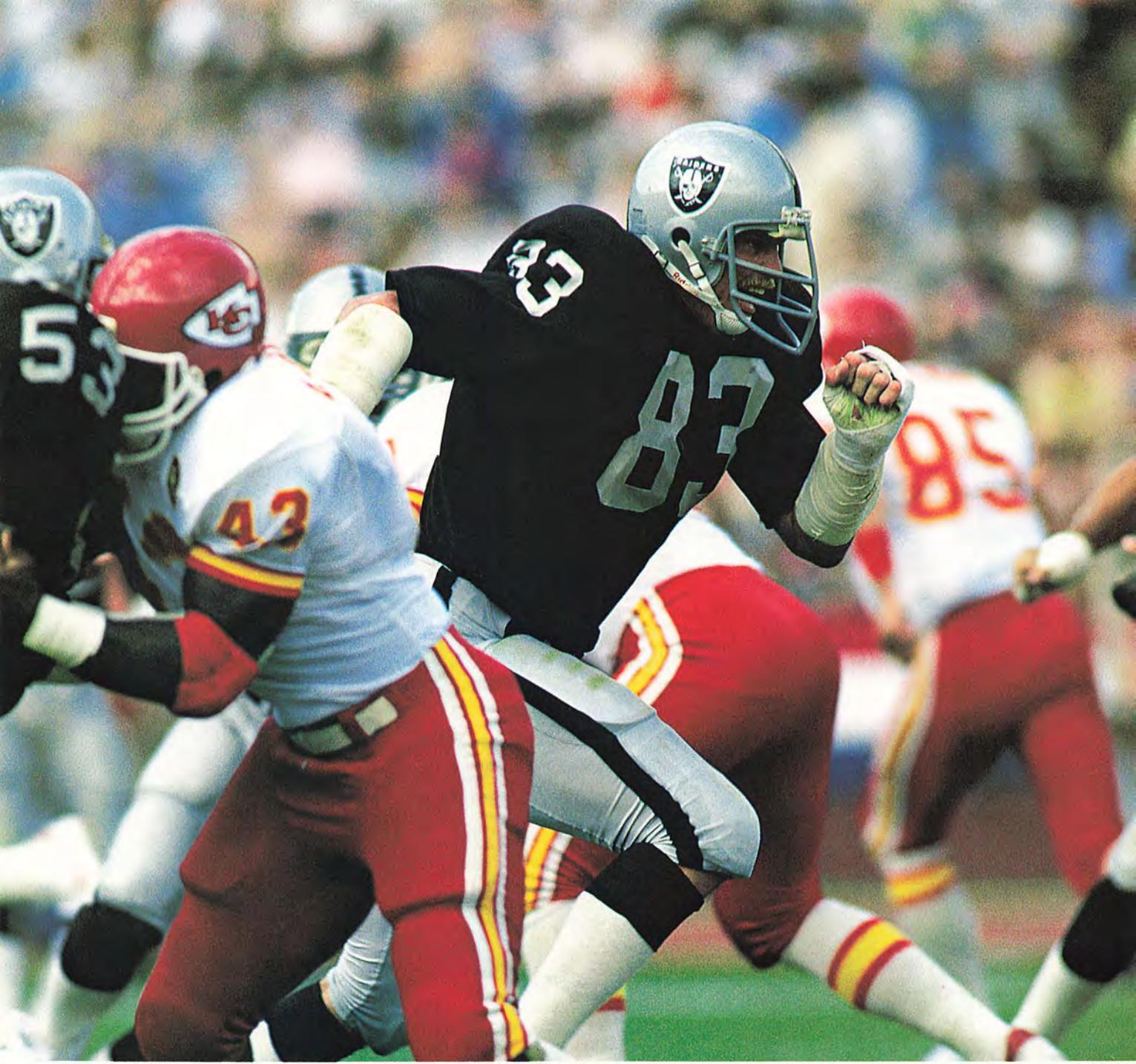


# AT 36

**I**N THE EMOTIONAL HEAT OF the 1982 AFC divisional playoff game between the Los Angeles Raiders and the New York Jets, Raiders defensive end Lyle Alzado did something unique. He removed the helmet of Jets tackle Chris Ward and threw it, narrowly missing Ward's bare head. The green missile landed 20 yards away, and Alzado was called for unsportsmanlike conduct.

Ted Hendricks, the Raiders' left outside linebacker, had a question.

"I went up to the referee," Hendricks says. "I asked him what the penalty was for, and he said, 'Your teammate threw a helmet.' I said, 'There's no rule that says you can't throw a helmet.' He said, 'Yeah, but it was the opposing player's helmet.' I said, 'There's still no rule that says you can't throw the opposing player's helmet.' He said, 'Hendricks, I called the penalty, now get out of here.' I said, 'Now you've explained it to me. If you called it, I can't do anything about it.'



*"My job is spontaneous," Hendricks says. Here, against Kansas City, he shows up on the right side and blitzes unchecked.*

"They put in a new rule: You can't throw the helmet. They had to put in the rule, because there wasn't any rule governing that. They want to be very official."

Hendricks finishes the story with the same expression he wears on the playing field—lips stretched tight, teeth barely exposed along the top row, eyes gleaming, the perfect blend of impishness and control, the satisfied look of the consummate prankster. All that remains, to complete the picture, is the familiar gesture that links his mischief with his professionalism. His teammates know it when they see it, and it simultaneously excites, inspires, and amuses the hell out of them. Hendricks need

only join his hands gently at the fingertips and give "that look of his," as Raiders linebacker Matt Millen calls it, and 15 years of defensive genius congeal in an instant.

If there are men in pro football whose rhythm sections include a different drummer, Hendricks may have an arrangement with an entirely different orchestra. Verbal sparring with an official fits a pattern that includes riding a horse onto the field at the Raiders' training camp one day, and another day greeting his teammates at midfield, seated at a table beneath a cafe umbrella, sipping lemonade. Patrolling the gate to the practice field in a silver Nazi-style field helmet decorated with the Raiders'

black stripe and pirate logo; showing up for practice one Halloween wearing a pumpkin carved in the shape of a football helmet; adorning his real Raiders helmet with an ostrich feather....Is a theme emerging here?

Hendricks's current delight is a 1980 Lincoln Town Car, purchased early last summer in Miami. He and a friend had planned to go into the limousine business there, but with the tourist trade on the decline in Miami, Hendricks asked two other friends to drive it cross-country. All he needed was his own chauffeur, a problem he solved by hiring a member of the Raiders' training staff who'd been laid off in the team's migration from Oakland. Mike Gonzalez, a.k.a.

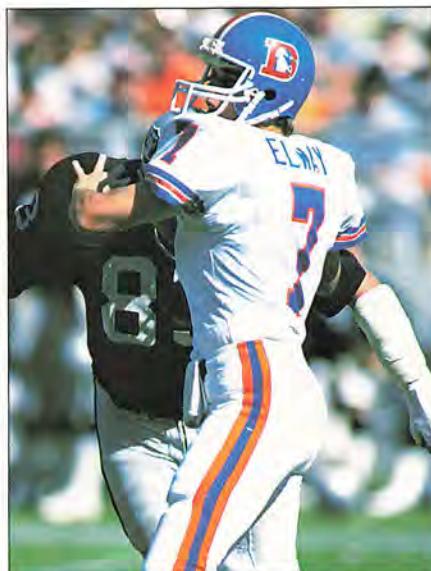
Gonzo, a Mormon convert just months from his mission, became Hendricks's driver pro tem.

"One of the reasons Ted hired me is that I don't drink," Gonzo says.

So Gonzo has memorized every curbstone and every bend from Hendricks's comfortable apartment on The Strand in Manhattan Beach to the Raiders' practice facility in nearby El Segundo, including detours to Pancho's, Brennan's, and the Stick 'n' Stein. Between trips, if he's paid up all Hendricks's bills and if the fan mail has been sorted (Hendricks answers all of it), Gonzo might just stretch out in the back seat and watch TV...unless the limo is pressed into emergency service, as it nearly was in September, when one of the Raiders put Gonzo on call in the event his pregnant wife went into labor while the team was on the practice field or on the road.

"Some of the players have talked to Ted about hiring the limo for special occasions, and sometime soon, he wants to just take a day and drive out to Palm Springs," Gonzo says. "Until then, the ride to the hotel the night before a home game is our longest haul."

**D**URING HIS 15-YEAR TOUR OF the NFL, Hendricks has evolved a special job description, always managing to elude football purists, and most opponents, by at least a step. Drawing in his "area" on a given play, or in a given situation, only confuses the issue, because his area often is entirely up to him. Quoting Bill King, the Raiders' well-educated, well-spoken radio broadcaster ("...the pivotal, quintessential player, who is always where the ball is, at the vortex of the action") comes closer to clarifying what he does. Citing Hendricks's measurable career accomplishments, as of the midway point of the 1983 season—26 interceptions, 13 fumble recoveries, two touchdowns on blocked punts, four safeties, and a total of 25 blocked kicks, (the latter two are NFL records), and 207 consecutive games, i.e., every scheduled game of his career, which touches three decades, should satisfy the statistics mavens. Seven Pro Bowl appearances attest to his peers' respect. Consensus all-pro honors with three different teams (Baltimore in 1971, Green Bay in 1974, and Oakland in 1980) attest to his continuing impression on pro football's cognoscenti. His three Super Bowl rings—from victories with Baltimore in V, and Oakland in XI and XV—are stashed somewhere. "I bring 'em out every now and then," Hendricks says. "For show."



**Multi-million-dollar collision:** Hendricks shows Denver's John Elway another meaning of "quick release."

Hendricks's physical dimensions, 6 feet 8 inches, 235 pounds, equipped with reaching and jumping ability, account partially for his having been set free in the Raiders' defensive scheme. Teammates working with him for the first time, or the first season, must endure bizarre moments in the twilight zone, wondering where he'll turn up next. The only logical part of all this roaming is that opposing offenses also tend to lose track of Hendricks—until it's too late. "I've never taken the time to analyze what I do," he says. "I just go where I think the ball is going."

"He studies a great deal more than people think he does," says Raiders linebackers coach and defensive coordinator Charlie Sumner. "He may give the impression he's not going about it the way he should, but he knows what's going on out there."

"Whatever he's doing at the time is the most important thing. If he's playing a football game, he's not thinking about anything else—the party afterward, or anything like that, because he knows he'll get to that. If he's out having a good time, he's not worried about practice the next day. When practice comes, he'll be ready to go."

Hendricks's good time on the field is acted out in concert with the three players positioned closest to him: left defensive end Howie Long, left inside linebacker Matt Millen, and strong safety Mike Davis.

Long, the Raiders' strong, mobile third-year lineman, says of Hendricks: "Ted opens the doors for me that wouldn't be there otherwise. In run blocking, you're going to have a problem blocking me single. You'd have a problem doubling me down, because that leaves a back on Ted. Ted just floats. You never know what he's gonna do. But that's okay, because I adjust to what he does."

"At Washington this year, he was saying all during the game, 'Dammit, Howie, they're runnin' away from us.' They ran five plays to our side the whole game. *Five*, out of like forty running plays.

"Ted is 6-8, has long arms, and it's hard to run a sweep on him. When we rush the quarterback together, we do a lot of things. He comes underneath me, I'll take two blockers, or he'll grab the tackle and reach over with one of those octopus arms and grab the back."

Long likes to think of Hendricks not so much as a mentor, but as a perfect fit in the Raiders' tradition. "A lot of people say, 'What do they do when you get drafted by the Raiders? Does someone pull

you aside and say, Hey, you're gonna be a badass? No. It's something that's passed down through guys like Ted Hendricks, guys who have been there, been through the wars, been through the games where we were down 33-10 and came back to win... things like that."

Millen also cut his professional teeth playing to Hendricks's immediate right in the Raiders' 3-4 alignment and admits that he still gets confused. "You kind of have to fill in for him... fill in where you have to," Millen says. "But he's so great, he makes so many things happen, you just let him go. Ted's so aware of what the offense is trying to do, he can take chances. He makes his own luck."

In the fourth quarter of a victory over the Denver Broncos earlier this season, the Raiders came up a man short on defense. Long, who had been clobbered during the previous series, was somewhere on the sideline. ("I was off talking to someone—or maybe no one—about what a beautiful setting it was, the Rocky Mountains and all," Long says.)

Millen: "So we were a man short. That doesn't present a problem. We were up 20-7, and for one play they weren't going to hurt you. So I changed the defense, and I just walked up and took Howie's place in the line. We could have got away with it, but Teddy called time out.

"I turned to him and started yelling, 'Why'd you call time out?! You don't have to call time out in a situation like this!'

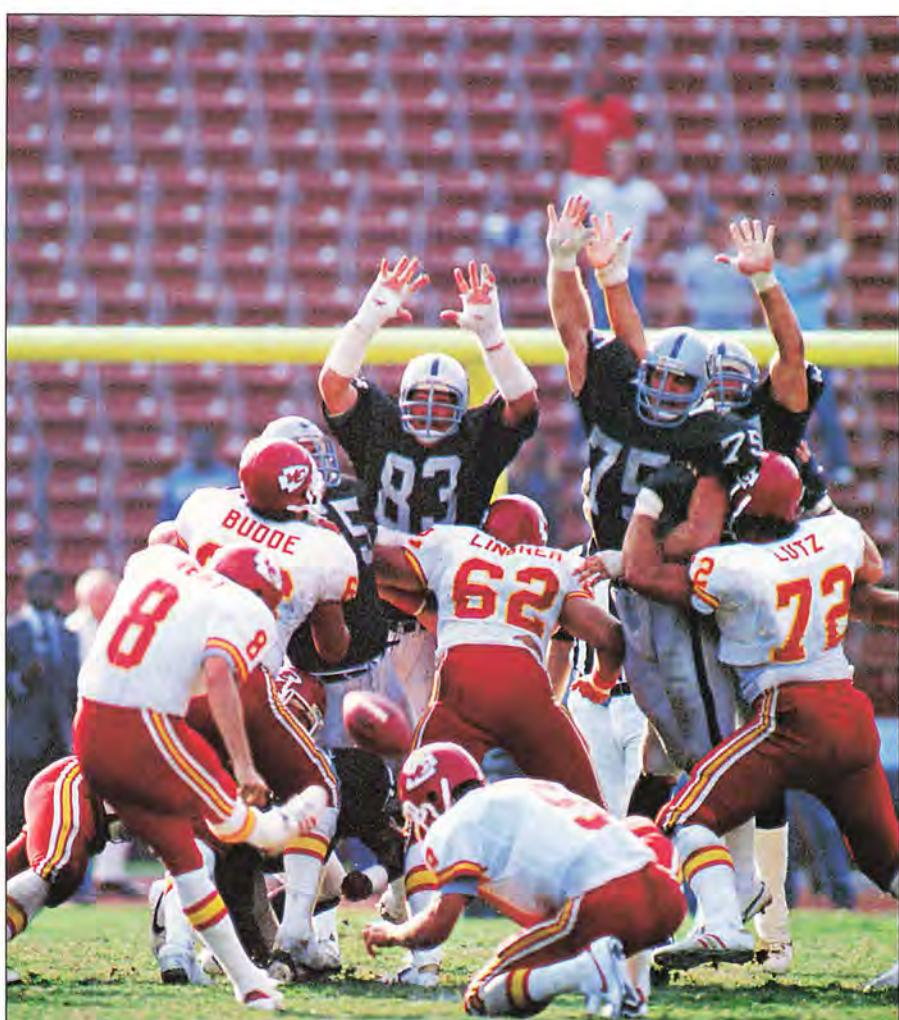
"And he just looked at me with that smile he gets on his face and he puts his fingers together and said [here Millen extends his lower lip and adopts the tone of a pouting child], 'I miss Howie, and I'm not playing without him.'

"I couldn't believe it. How the heck could you react to something like that? That was Teddy, all right. That was him perfectly. He has a million of those."

Mike Davis credits Hendricks with having kept him free of serious injury. "Playing behind him," Davis says, "I can't help but be safe, because he and I discuss a lot of things before we go into the game and while we're playing."

"The main thing he's taught me is patience, being able to think a play or two ahead, understanding what a team is trying to do in terms of setting you up for a particular play, and then just being an athlete, being able to adjust to a situation that we didn't plan for, but the opposition obviously planned for, and then being able to negate it."

It's ironic that Hendricks, so accomplished in the art of denying individuals



**Hendricks goes high to knock down a field goal attempt by Chiefs' Nick Lowery...**

and teams their preconceived objectives, should elicit such positive response from all around him. Listen to Washington tight end Don Warren, who, despite the Redskins' 37-35 victory in their early October slug-out with the Raiders, had his hands full with Hendricks. "I don't think I ever really got a clear shot at him," Warren said. "You go to block him, and all you get are legs and arms, these limbs reaching out at you. He's got these great physical tools, but the main thing is, he knows how to use his height, his reach.... And another thing. There was a lot of talking going on out there, a lot of bad-mouthing. But Hendricks didn't say one word to me. He just did his job."

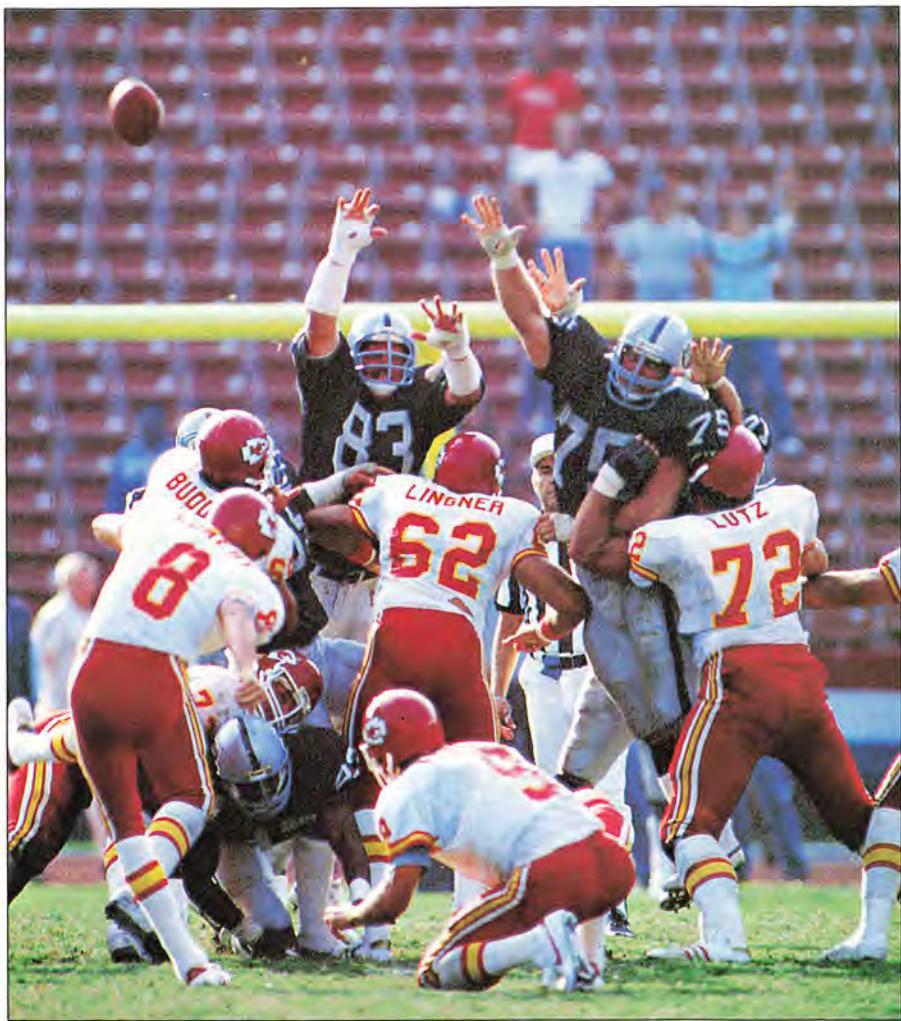
The following week against Kansas City, Hendricks's final task was to get in the way of Nick Lowery's 48-yard field-goal attempt with eight seconds left. Reaching above a group surge in the middle of the Raiders' placekicking defense, Hendricks swatted the ball to the ground, securing a 21-20 Raiders victory.

Almost two years earlier, to the day, Hendricks had blocked a 31-yard attempt by Tampa Bay's Bill Cope, sav-

ing an 18-16 victory. Time left: eight seconds. Hendricks's block against the Buccaneers in 1981 provided temporary relief from one of the low-water marks in Raiders history. The victory broke a chain of three consecutive shutout losses, an NFL record. The Raiders finished 7-9 that year, their only losing season since 1964.

As if to underscore Howie Long's remark about slow business on the left side of the Raiders' defense, Seattle showed little interest in running the ball to its right in the early stages of its 38-36 victory over the Raiders in week seven of 1983. Two first-quarter attempts netted negligible yardage. The next time the Seahawks sent Curt Warner in that direction, Hendricks stepped across the line of scrimmage, waited as if assigned to a spot marked "X," and neatly folded Warner's body into that spot by applying pressure downward from Warner's shoulders. Forward progress from the point of impact: none.

Moments later, Hendricks dropped into the flat area as Seahawks quarterback Jim Zorn rolled to his side. Finding no receiver open, Zorn tucked the ball



*...preserving the Raiders' 21-20 victory at Los Angeles earlier this season.*

and ran...for a two-yard gain. Having recovered from a 10-yard drop, Hendricks, just two weeks short of his thirty-sixth birthday, outscrambled (and tackled) the noted scrambler.

Hendricks again assesses the effects of a 15-year career on his skills. "There was a time when I could cover a tight end man-to-man...and keep up with him," he says.

The flip side of that gradual decline in reaction time is Hendricks's store of learning. "My job is spontaneous," he says. "What I'm doing is expecting what someone else is trying to do. By anticipating, I get a great advantage. Then I attack very aggressively. I'm not in a standstill situation. If you attack, it throws the offense off, actually forces them to cut their time, the longevity of their play, their time on the field. All of a sudden something they've practiced becomes lost. They've got to make a decision one way or another. It forces them to be very quick-thinking."

"If you're there before they expect you, sometimes you get some great comments as you're running by them in the pass rush."

**C**HARACTERIZING TED HENDRICKS is no more difficult than photographing the blinking of an eye, or recording the sound of the setting sun. "You'll write that one in the abstract," says Raiders quarterback Jim Plunkett. Then he tries to get specific.

"I remember one time right after I'd first met him," Plunkett says. "We were on our way out to a golf tournament in Apple Valley [California]. It was hot, and when the bus driver refused to stop at a roadside store, Ted roared at him, 'You stop this bus at the next store, or I'll stop it, because I'll be the one who's driving.' The driver stopped at the next store, and Ted took orders for the whole bus."

Bill King, the voice of the Raiders for the last 18 years, says, "I can recall a practice the day before Super Bowl XI. The actual work period was preceded by a very frolicsome baseball game of sorts, in which they were using a football, and whoever batted used his helmet as a bat. Hendricks was very much in the midst of all that; he was totally given over to that game. There was absolute separation from the practice that was about to

follow, and from the game the next day. It was then that I had the sense that there was no way in the world this team would fail to win Super Bowl XI."

Former Raiders head coach John Madden has said, "If I had had a whole team full of Hendrickses, it would have been an awful lot of fun to coach. I had three rules—be on time, pay attention, and play like hell when I ask you to. He always did all three. He was a real joy, one of the best ever to play this game."

A three-time All-America defensive end at the University of Miami, Hendricks was drafted in the second round by Baltimore in 1969. The problem of where to put a literal lightweight (he weighed 215 at the time) in an NFL defensive scheme was what took the Colts, and others, so long. Eleven defensive players went before Hendricks. "Rumor had it that Bill Arnsparger [Baltimore's defensive coordinator at the time, now Miami's] was responsible for me being with the Colts," Hendricks says. "He was the only guy who stuck up for me, and Shula was the only one who went along with him. The vote of the coaching staff was seven to two, against."

He backed up middle linebacker Mike Curtis in the Colts' 4-3 defense his first year (1969), but was used in all 14 games, primarily on special teams. The following year, the Colts finished the season with a victory over Dallas in Super Bowl V, as Jim O'Brien kicked a field goal in the final seconds to win it 16-13. By that time, Hendricks was a starter, and now had an easier time fending off questions about his weight. "If you can play, you play," became his standard response. All-pro recognition for the next three years and selection to the AFC Pro Bowl team in each of those seasons spoke volumes.

In 1971, he intercepted five passes, and in a Monday night game against the Los Angeles Rams he inspired a Colts victory with a 31-yard fumble return for a touchdown. He matched his career-high five interception total in 1974, but by that time he had been traded to Green Bay by Baltimore general manager, the late Joe Thomas. The move followed Hendricks's decision to sign with the Jacksonville Sharks of the then-new World Football League, and his announced intention to play out his option with the Colts.

Hendricks: "Joe Thomas had a motto. He said, 'Nobody plays out his option with Joe Thomas.' He called me and asked, 'Are you absolutely planning to go to the World Football League,' and I said, 'Yes, I am.' That cut him off com-

pletely, without further negotiation.

"A couple days later, another phone call came in, saying, 'How do you feel about being traded to Green Bay?'"

After his one year with the Packers, another all-pro season, Hendricks says, "I actually had [Green Bay head coach and general manager] Dan Devine up against the wall. I was playing out my option at a ten percent decrease in pay, compared to what the World Football League was paying. There wasn't going to be any renegotiation of my contract."

The World Football League began to self-destruct, and Hendricks began shopping his wares around the NFL. Miami, Atlanta, and the New York Giants joined the bidding but Oakland managing general partner Al Davis reached Hendricks during his talks with the Giants and promised to top whatever the Giants were offering. Hendricks signed with the Raiders, and the Packers eventually were compensated with first-round draft choices in 1976 and 1977.

In his first year at Oakland, Hendricks stood by reluctantly as Gerald Irons and Phil Villapiano occupied the right side in the Raiders' 4-3 alignment. "They used me as sort of a cross between a stand-up defensive end and a roving linebacker, somewhat like what Tony Cline used to do in the Raiders' scheme," Hendricks says. "I took his position in third-down situations that year."

In the 1975 AFC playoffs against Cincinnati, Hendricks sacked Bengals quarterback Ken Anderson four times. The Raiders lost to Pittsburgh in the conference championship game, but they had gained a new outside linebacker along the way. During the offseason, Irons was traded to Cleveland, and Hendricks was a satisfied starter.

Selecting Hendricks's "best year" in the NFL usually comes down to a coin-flip between his one season in Green Bay and the 1980 season with Oakland, the year the Raiders drove to a victory in Super Bowl XV. After Hendricks had played a major role in Oakland's 27-10 defeat of Philadelphia, a performance that included his blocking a field-goal attempt near the end of the first half, Al Davis remarked, "People said we gave up too much [two first-round draft choices] when we signed Ted. I wonder what they're saying now."

Hendricks entered the NFL at a time when Vince Lombardi's Packer Sweep was the league's aesthetic ideal. In the 1980s, the increased sophistication of NFL offenses, the modification of blocking techniques to give an advantage to offensive linemen, limiting defensive

backs and linebackers to the five yards beyond the line of scrimmage in which to hit a receiver...all leave Hendricks a little nonplussed. And what about all these backs and wide receivers and tight ends in motion? How does he react?

"Instinctively," he says. "I've seen just about every play that can be imagined."

One of the more imaginative offensive sets appeared as in a dream in 1979, when Miami visited Oakland. Hendricks remembers a moment of spontaneous jousting with Dolphins head coach Don Shula, his first coach at Baltimore. "[Wide receiver] Nat Moore lined up at tight end. I stood up, pointed my finger at Nat, and yelled over to Shula, 'This is a supreme insult, thinking that this man can block me.' Nat was saying, 'Shhhh. Be quiet, be quiet.' But I yelled, 'I know the play's not coming this way,' and sure enough, it didn't. When the play ended, I looked over at Shula, and he was cracking up."

**Y**EAR-ROUND CONDITIONING programs have become standard procedure among all NFL teams, having filtered up from college programs. Bench-pressing ability already is a common measuring rod for so-called "strength" positions. So where does Hendricks stand in the midst of all this tonnage? Off to the side, mostly.

"It's never bothered *me*," he says. "We had an assistant coach one time at Baltimore. I'd just made all-pro for the second time. He called me in to evaluate me—my statistics and all. He told me to do a little more lifting with my legs. I just said 'Okay' and didn't do anything about it."

Hendricks will admit to having worked out since then—with free weights occasionally during the last three or four years, at the urging of his former teammate and friend Elmer Collett, who extended his own career as a guard with San Francisco and Baltimore, thanks to a rigorous strength-conditioning routine. Hendricks took Collett's prodding to heart and now names another friend, Ben Chollar of Stinson Beach, California, as his weight coach.

As for his training regimen during football season, he says, "I really don't care now. I've got my system down. I'm doing well. They don't bother me. They don't force me to do anything. I'd probably snap back at 'em. As a matter of fact, that happened today out on the practice field. One of the coaches asked me if I wanted to work on my pass coverage. I said, 'No.'"

**G**ONZO REACHES UNDERneath the steering column, activating a siren that is more Spike Jones than Dirty Harry. The limo, loaded to half-capacity (based on the dozen Raiders who set the car record in September), just clears the curb of the parking lot of the Raiders' El Segundo training facility. Hendricks and some friends are on their way to lunch. Gonzo asks, "Where to?"

Hendricks's reluctant choice is a trendy dining spot in the first shopping mall south of Los Angeles International Airport. The lure is a free lunch for the group, arranged by a club man. Still, Hendricks can't stand the place. "Is that because they're trying to promote it as the official restaurant of the Raiders?" asks one of his friends.

"That's correct," Hendricks says. He'd rather be headed toward a working class tavern in the heart of El Segundo, the site of his team's weekly "camaraderie" after Thursday practice.

The thought of an "official" anything of the Raiders, a team of diverse characters, or an "official" anything of Ted Hendricks, is a pure contradiction in terms. For one thing, he's never anywhere, on or off the field, long enough to be packaged or labeled. Once football season is over, he could be with friends at his home in Miami, or maybe with his wife and two sons in Orinda (a suburb of Oakland), or near the football camp he set up a few years ago in Hawaii with former Redskins guard John Wilbur, or hanging out with Elmer Collett and Ben Chollar and the rest of his friends in Stinson Beach, a wooded enclave on the western edge of California's Marin County.

In mid-autumn, Hendricks left practice on a Monday afternoon and flew north to Stinson Beach, trying to close a deal on another house there. Minutes after Gonzo and Hendricks had left El Segundo, two young girls from the Raiders' neighborhood came roller-skating up the sidewalk.

"Has Marcus Allen left yet?" one girl asked. "He gave me a kiss once."

"He's probably still inside," said a player walking toward his car. "You could skate over to that doorway there and ask."

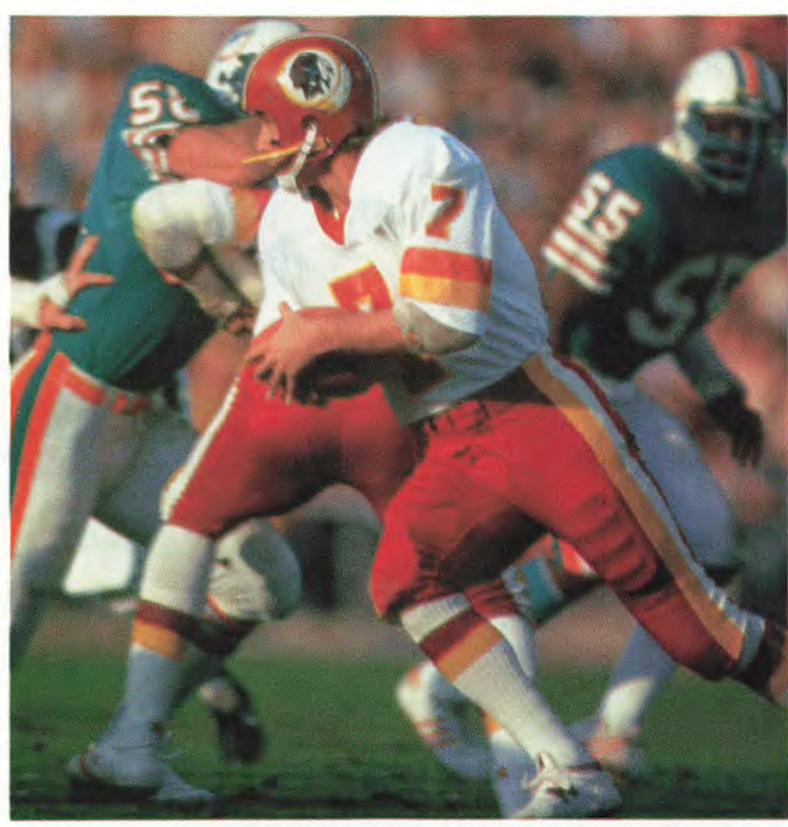
"No way," said the roller skater. "The last time I did that I ended up in the locker room and got in trouble. A man chased me out of there soooo fast, I couldn't believe it."

"Who told you to go inside the locker room?" the player asked.

"The man who owns the limo." **PRO**



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# Fading Back...But Not Out

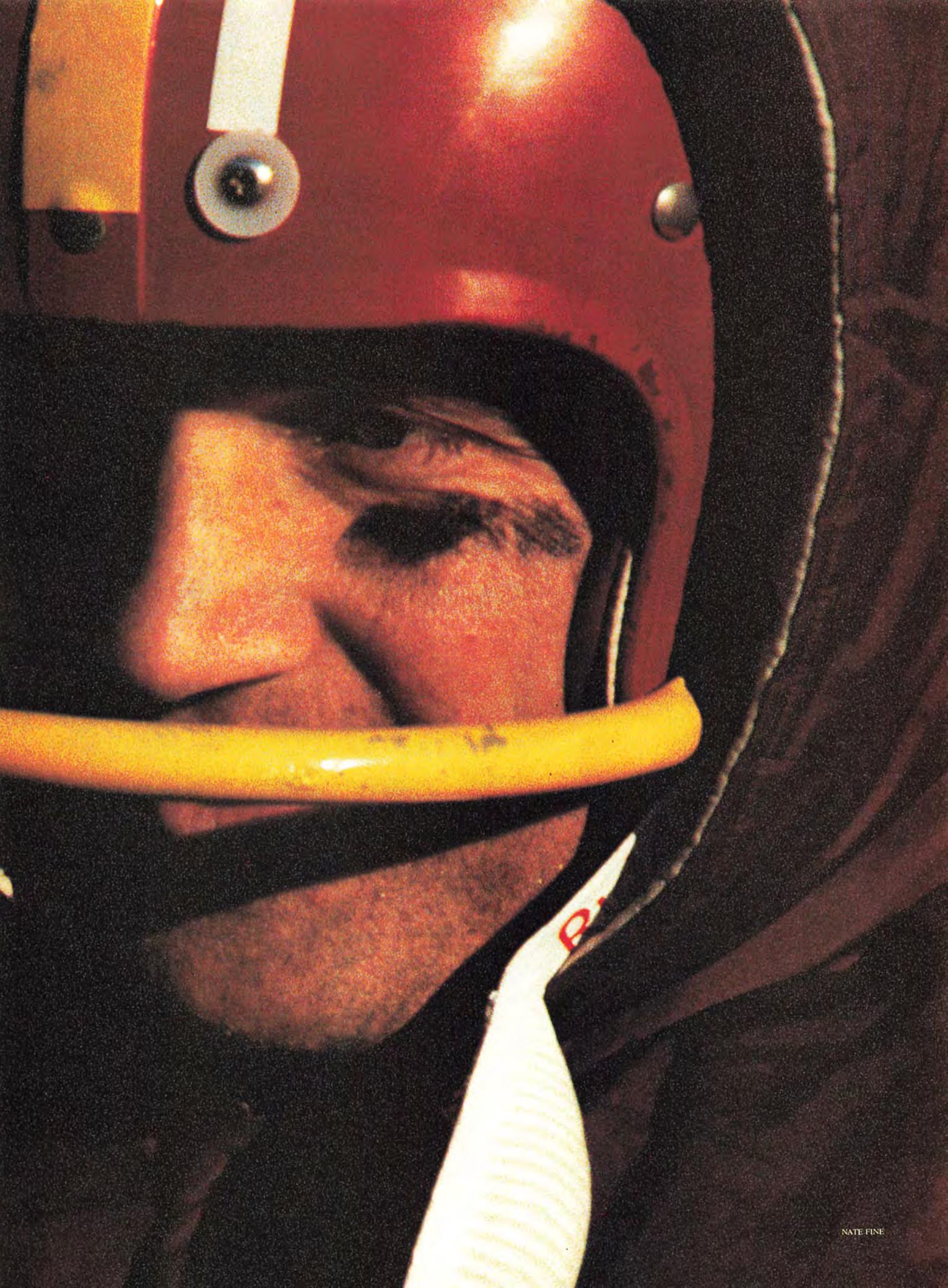
First, keep in mind that in the real world, most of these men are barely within hailing distance of middle age. The world of games is the only setting where they must deal daily with the "erosion" of their skills, the "ravages" of time, the notion of senior citizenship. The late American writer Henry Miller, had he been asked, might even have underscored quarterbacks, and all football players, in his assertion that Americans' adolescence lasts until age 40. Still, the thought that men born before 1950 might be hanging around the playing fields of the NFL, to say nothing of their performing well, seems to inspire poets of the sports page to new tributes, paens to warriors wizened and windblown, their cheeks cracked, their brows furrowed from years of facing third and long. Time and tension do tend to teach, and the lesson, readable in those same quarterbacks' faces, echoes Satchel Paige's cardinal rule of longevity: "Don't look back. Something might be gaining on you."



Theismann as a rookie, 1974

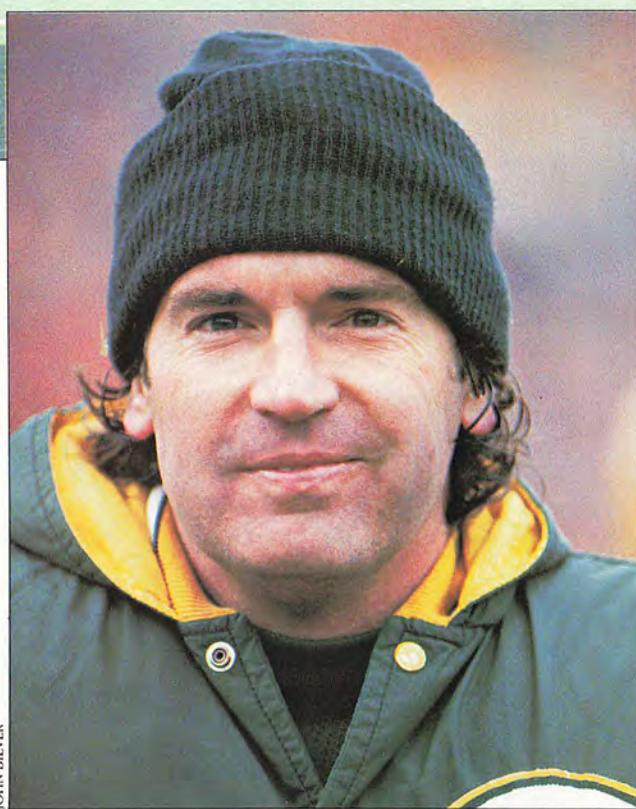
## **Joe Theismann, 34**

*The life force of the Washington Redskins' Super Bowl XVII championship team did a three-year apprenticeship with Toronto of the Canadian Football League before joining the Redskins in 1974. Only Sammy Baugh and Sonny Jurgensen, both Pro Football Hall of Fame enshrinees with long careers, amassed more yardage than Theismann's 16,327 at the outset of 1983.*





HERB WEITMAN



JOHN BIEVER



Dickey in 1971

Hart in 1966

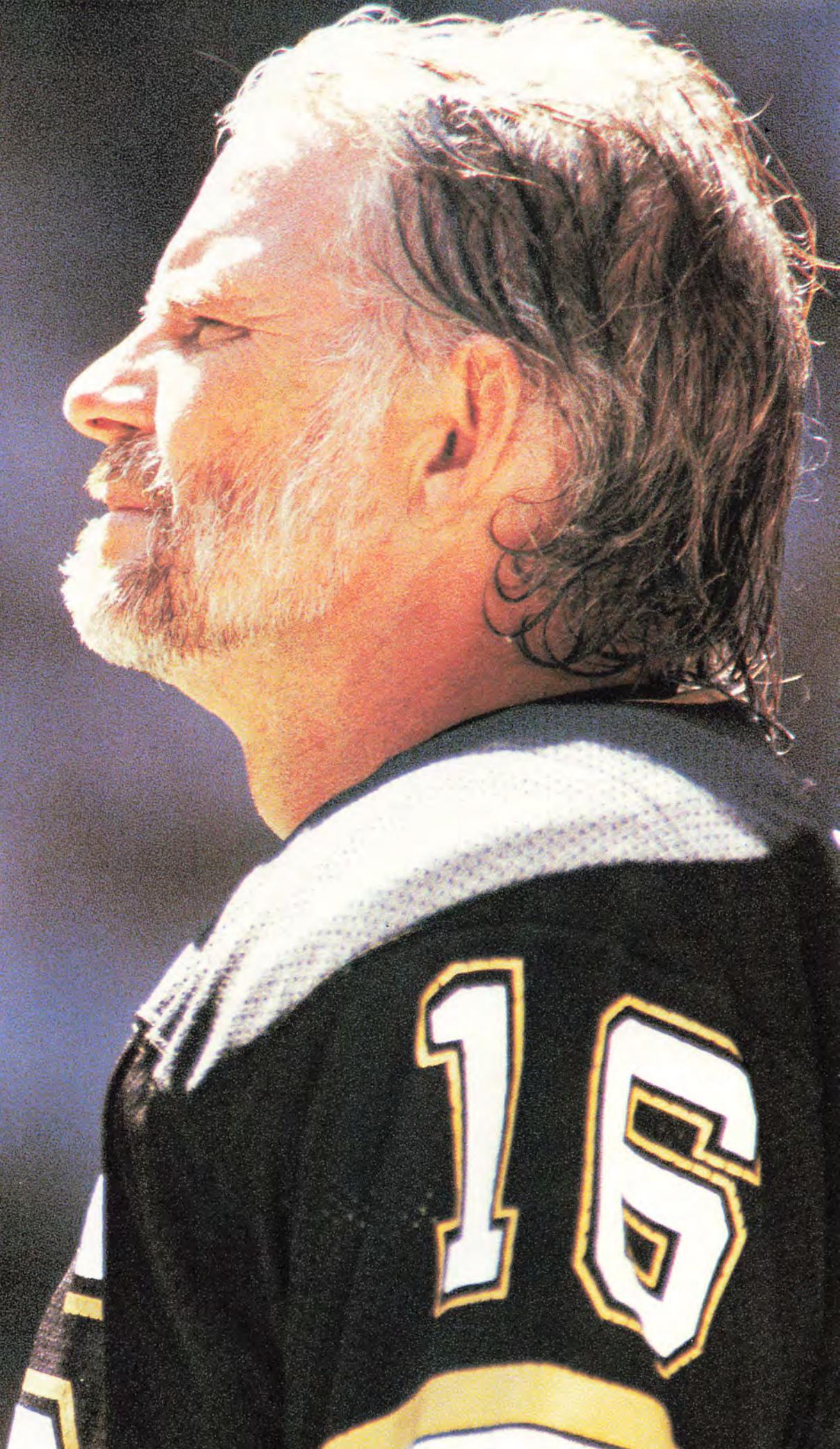
Stabler in 1970

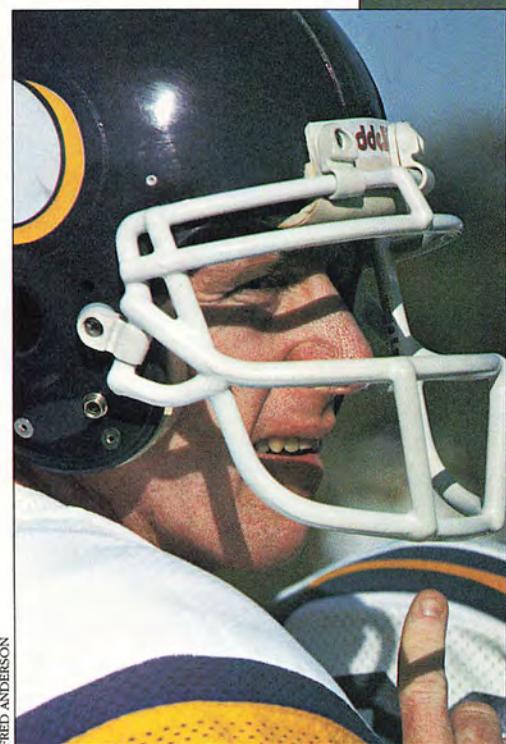
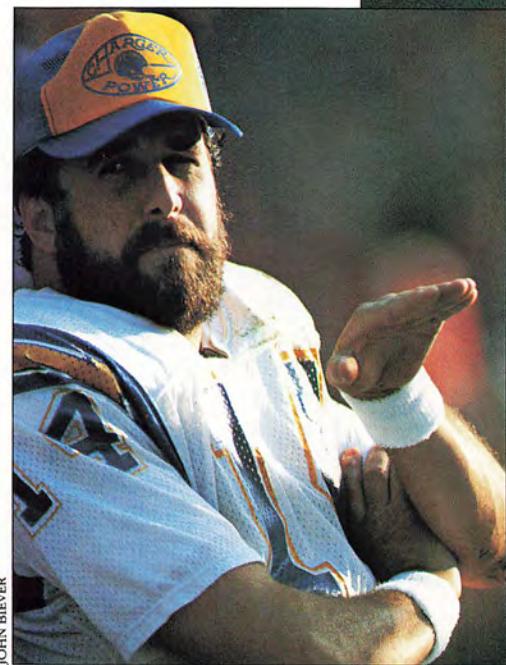
#### Lynn Dickey, 34

Dickey's patience through lean years in Green Bay began paying off in 1978, when the Packers acquired tight end Paul Coffman and wide receiver James Lofton. John Jefferson arrived in 1981 and Phillip Epps in 1982, filling out a supporting cast that may be the best in the NFL. "Cast" has dual meaning for Dickey, (left), whose injuries over the last 12 years could fill a catalogue. (See page 49 for more on Dickey.)

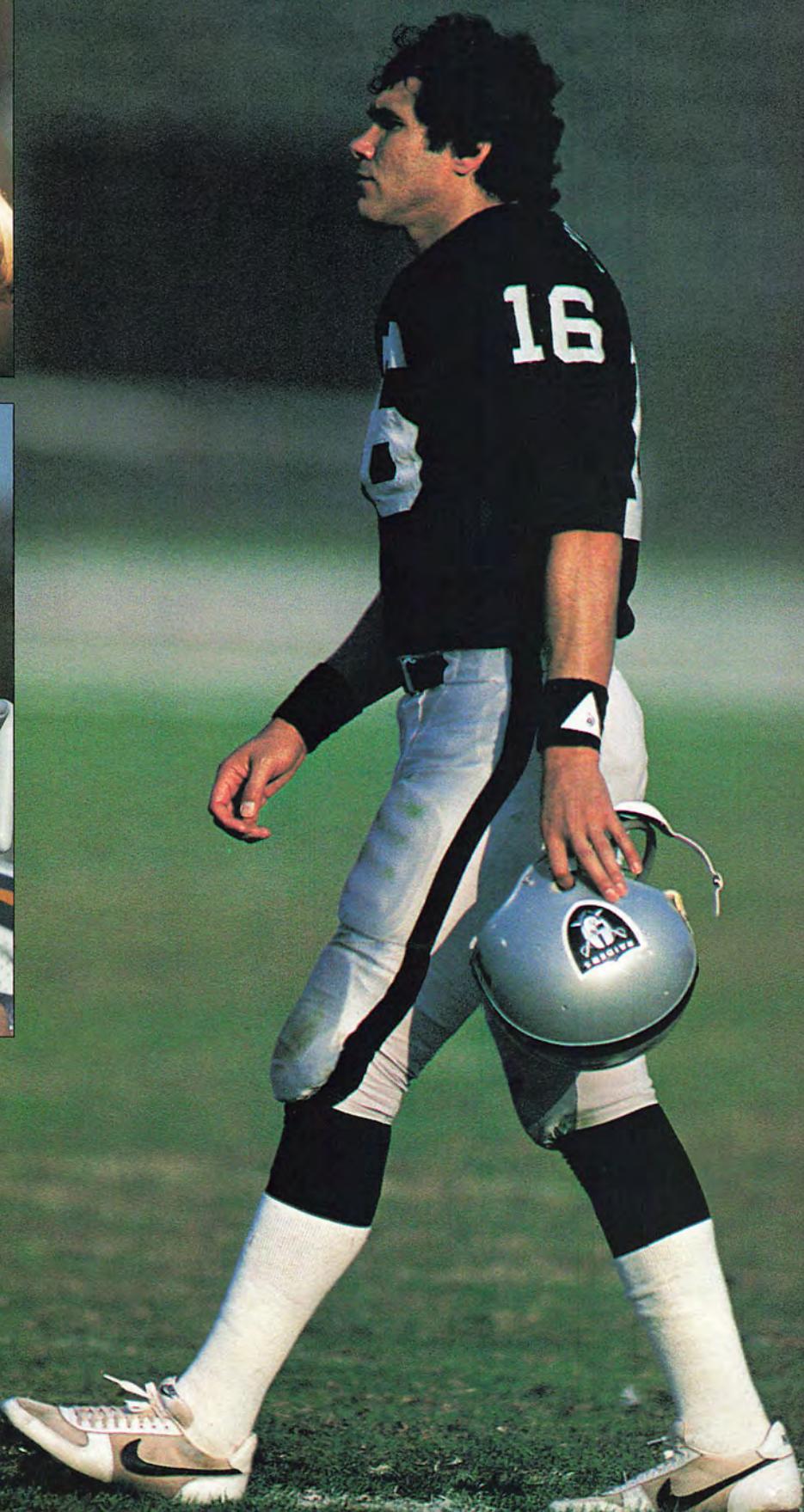
#### Jim Hart, 39

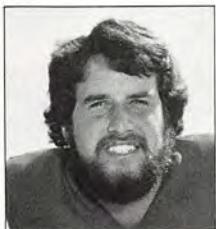
Talk about venerable. Presently the NFL's longest-toothed quarterback, Hart (top) began the 1983 season ranked first among active passers in attempts (4,978), completions (2,450), and yards (34,047). The latter figure ranks him third in NFL history, behind Fran Tarkenton and Johnny Unitas. Hart's halcyon days were the mid-1970s; he appeared in four consecutive AFC-NFC Pro Bowls from 1974-77.





JOHN McDONOUGH





Fouts in 1973

#### Dan Fouts, 32

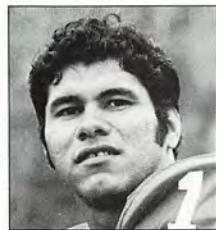
Though hampered by a rotator cuff injury in 1983, Fouts (far left, top) has built the foundation for what could become the NFL's most prolific passing career. His league-record 4,802 yards in 1981 may be the game's all-time statistical wonder... or would that be his career total of 30 games with more than 300 yards through the air...?



Manning in 1971

#### Archie Manning, 34

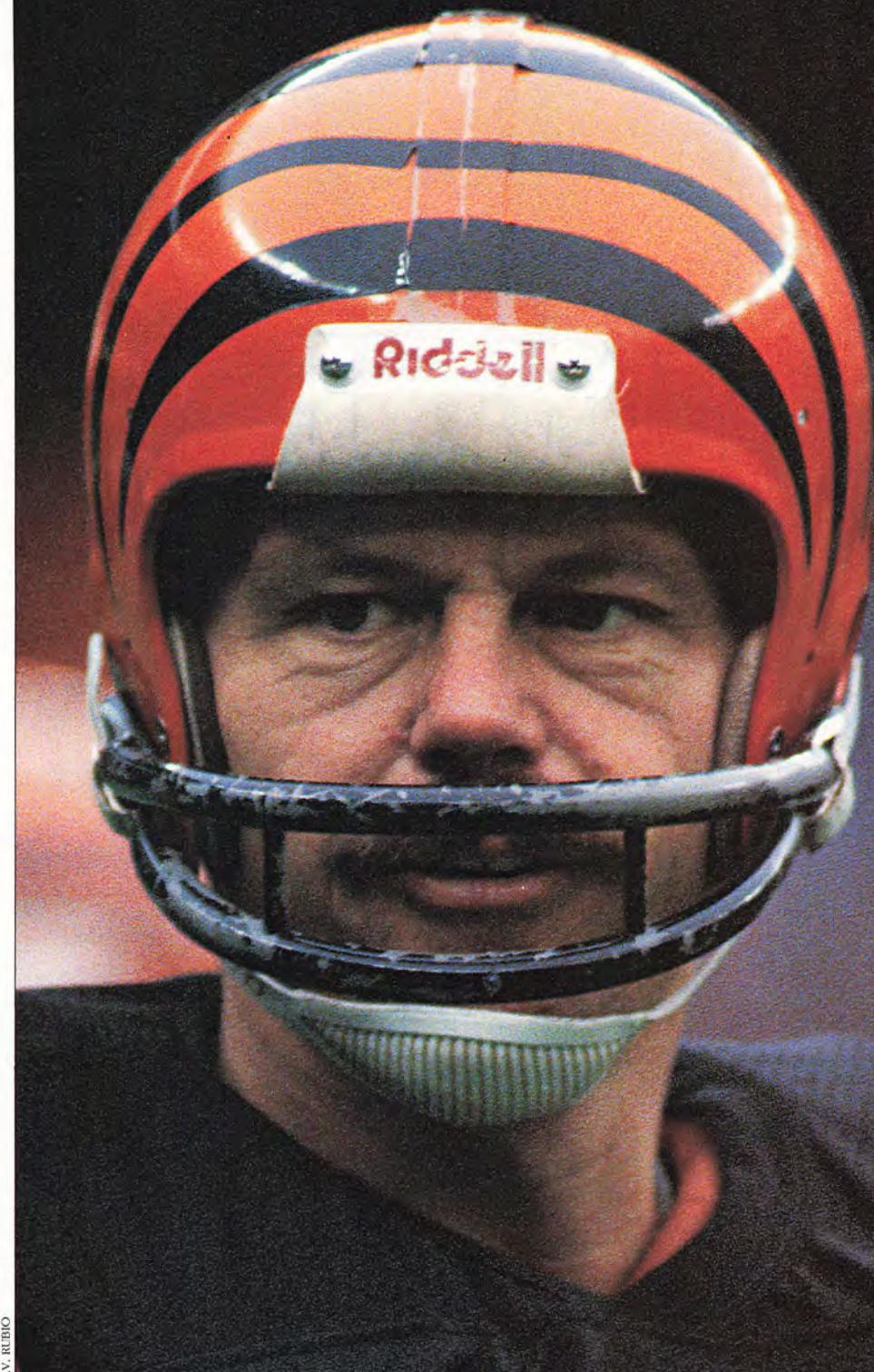
At Ole Miss, they celebrated him in song. In New Orleans, they wondered when the Saints would play up to his level. An 8-8 finish was the best they could do in Manning's 11-plus years (before being traded to Houston in mid-1982); still, at the outset of 1983, he had thrown for 22,611 career yards. Minnesota acquired Manning (far left, bottom) via a trade early in the 1983 season, when Tommy Kramer was injured.



Plunkett in 1971

#### Jim Plunkett, 36

Plunkett's long and winding road has taken him from Heisman Trophy honors at Stanford, to an auspicious five-year start at New England, to injury and despair in San Francisco, to victory in Super Bowl XV with Oakland. As a Los Angeles Raider (left), he saw the playoffs in 1982 and the bench at the midway point of 1983.



M.V. STUDIO



Anderson in 1971

#### Ken Anderson, 34

Resilient and serviceable in the thirteenth year of his career, Anderson led Cincinnati to Super Bowl XVI in 1981, then highlighted the Bengals' drive to the 1982 playoffs by completing 70.6 percent of his passes, an NFL single-season record.

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Sipe in 1974

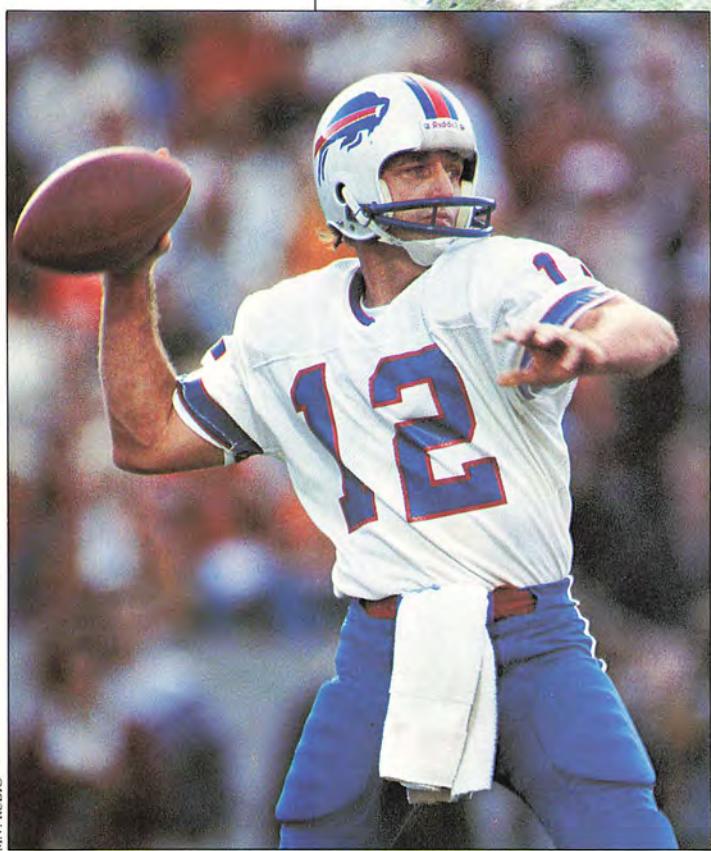
CARL SKALAK, JR.

### Brian Sipe, 34

*Sipe's durability and patience were nurtured by two years as a member of the Cleveland taxi squad before making the active roster in 1974. Sipe (right) served as backup to Mike Phipps until 1976, and since then has raised his career yardage total above 20,000 and the blood pressure of Cleveland fans about 50 points as leader of the Kardiac Kids' suspense-oriented offense.*



DENNIS COLLINS



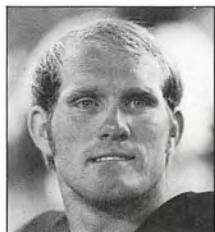
M.V. RUBIO



Ferguson in 1973

### Joe Ferguson, 33

*In his 11-year career with Buffalo, Ferguson (left) has played every game, including the Bills' 1980 playoff loss to San Diego. Despite a badly sprained ankle, he was mobile enough to put Buffalo ahead 14-13, before falling to the Chargers in the final two minutes.*



MALCOLM EMMONS

Bradshaw in 1970

### Terry Bradshaw, 35

*Who will be the next quarterback to direct four Super Bowl victories? It's a distinction Bradshaw (right) may hold exclusively until well into the next century. Over a 14-year career, he has passed for 27,912 yards, a figure that has remained static in 1983 while he recovers from a slow-healing arm injury.*

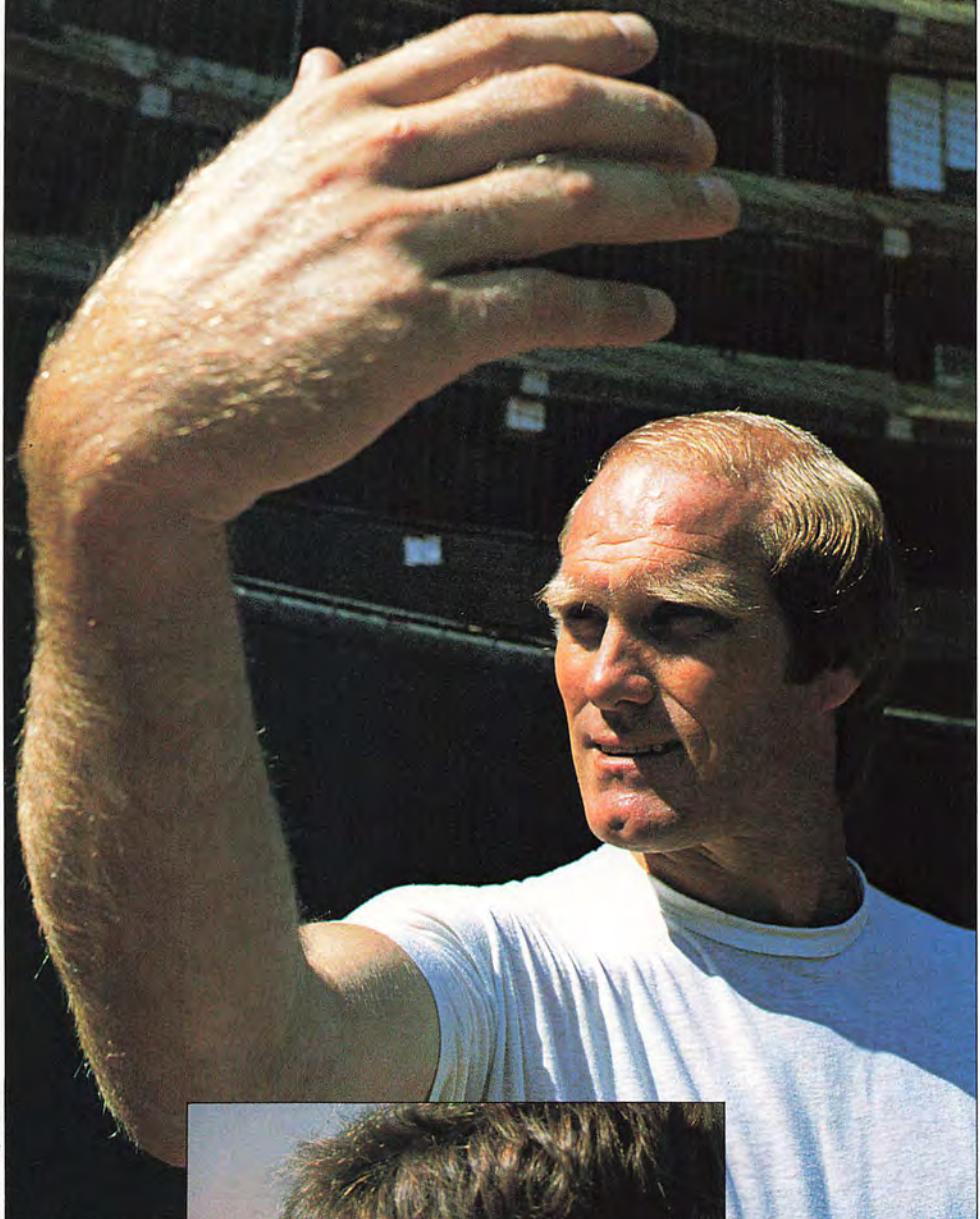


HERB WEITMAN

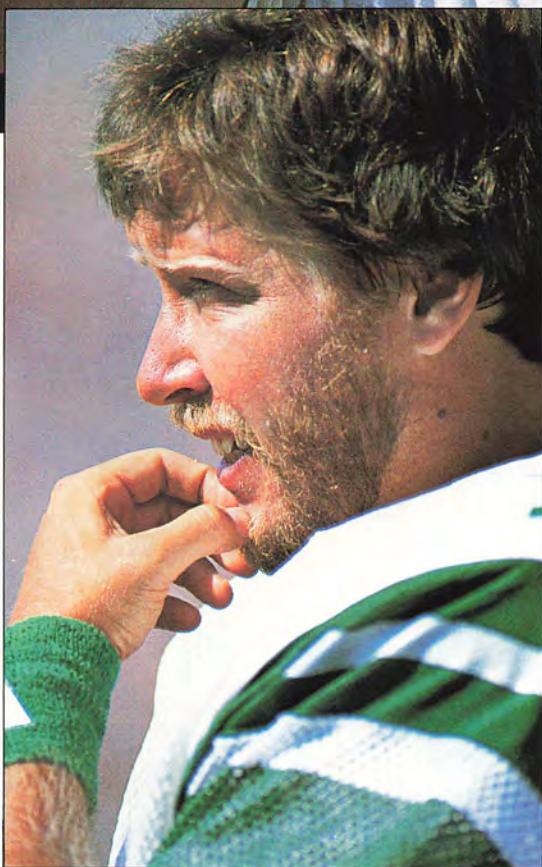
Jaworski in 1974

### Ron Jaworski, 32

*Three years of obscurity and frustration in Los Angeles gave way to personal reclamation when Jaworski (below) was traded to Philadelphia in 1977. As a starter since then, he has led the Eagles to a 50-37 regular-season record and an appearance in Super Bowl XV. **PRO***



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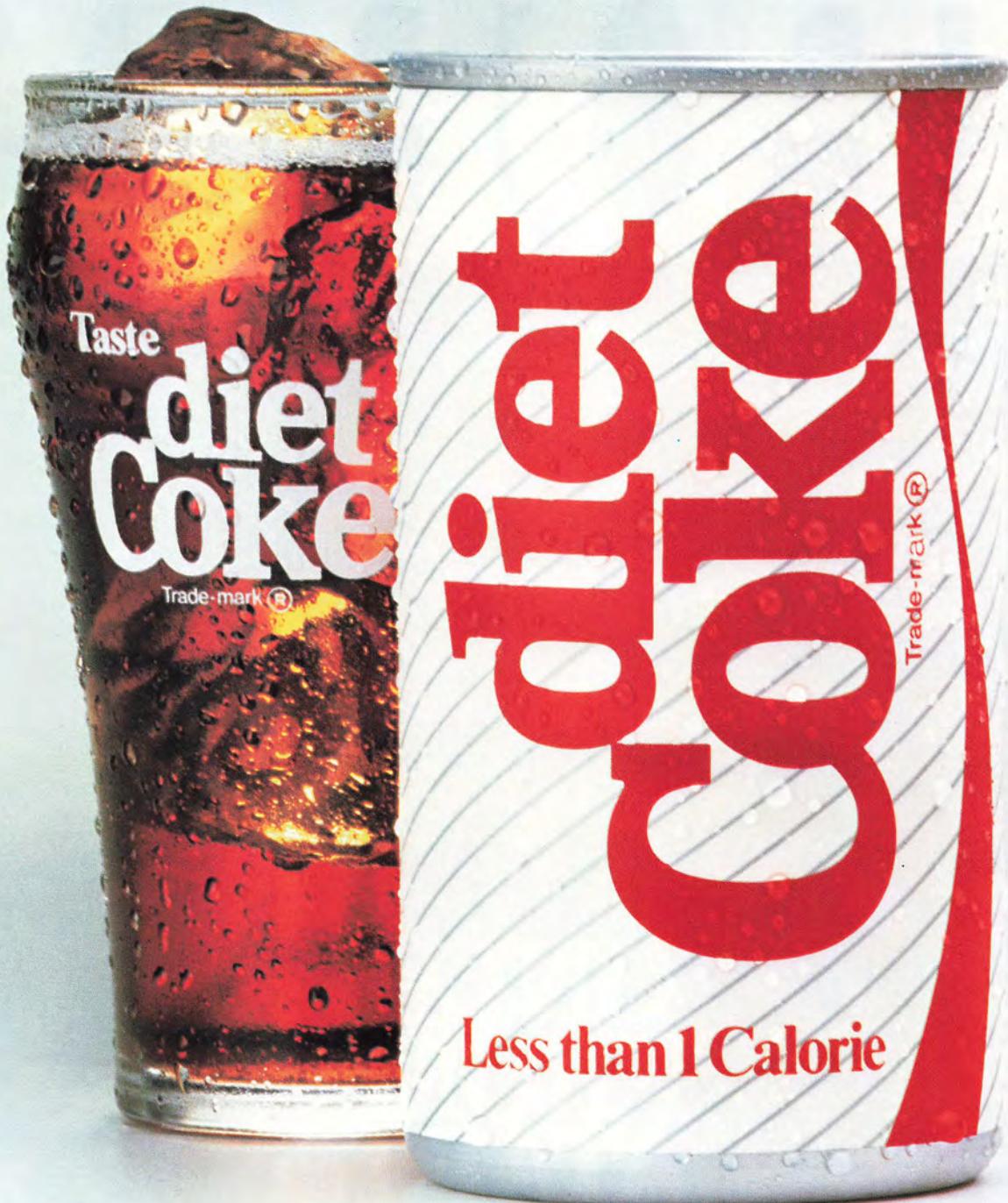
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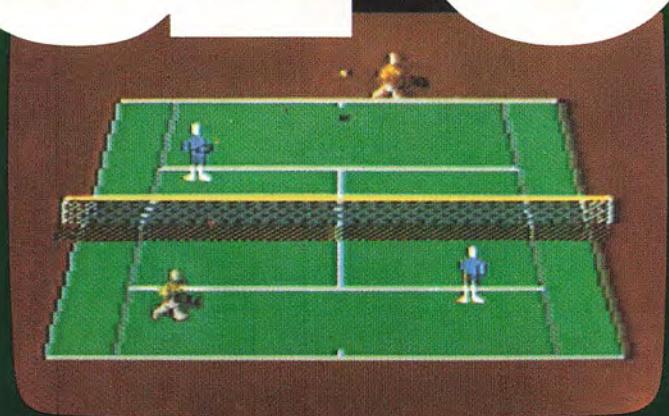


# Just for the taste of it.



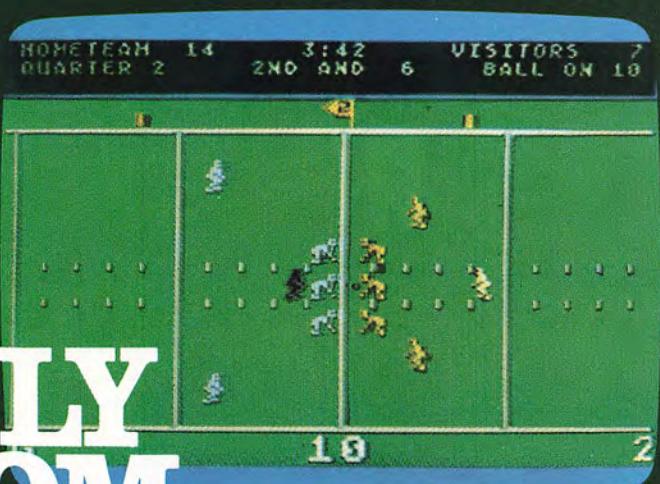
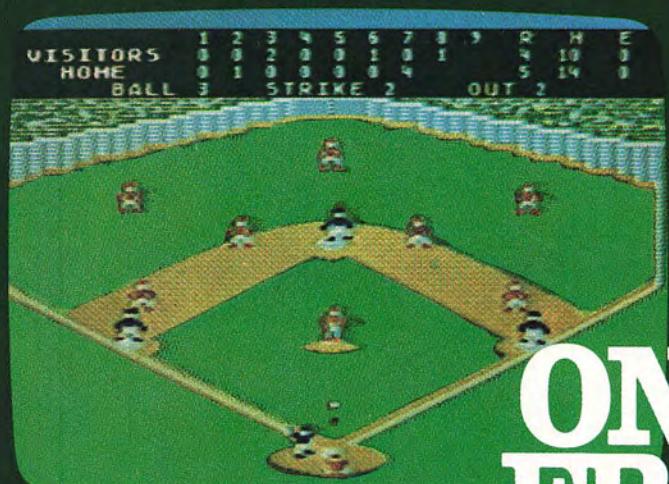
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# BOMB BAY

*Lofton, Jefferson, Coffman, and Epps Have Caught On in Wisconsin*  
By Jim Klobuchar

**J**ames Lofton, man of order and style, studiously examined the texture of a droopy tomato slice swathed in mayonnaise on his hamburger.

He had appointments to make, and miles to go. He decided to combine one of those with lunch at the Versailles Palace of the Jackpine, which is a reasonable description of the Green Bay Packers' new \$2-million headquarters and training parlor.

Lofton carefully rearranged the tomato and pickles to allow them some sense of rapport with the mayonnaise. The man with all-pro standards grinned. "That outfit [the fast food chain] never gets it right," he said.

Put the food chain on waivers, Mr. Lofton?

Don't be silly. James Lofton likes his random moments as a pixie, spoofing his reputation for being something close to the living end as the super athlete and a man of manner and urbanity.

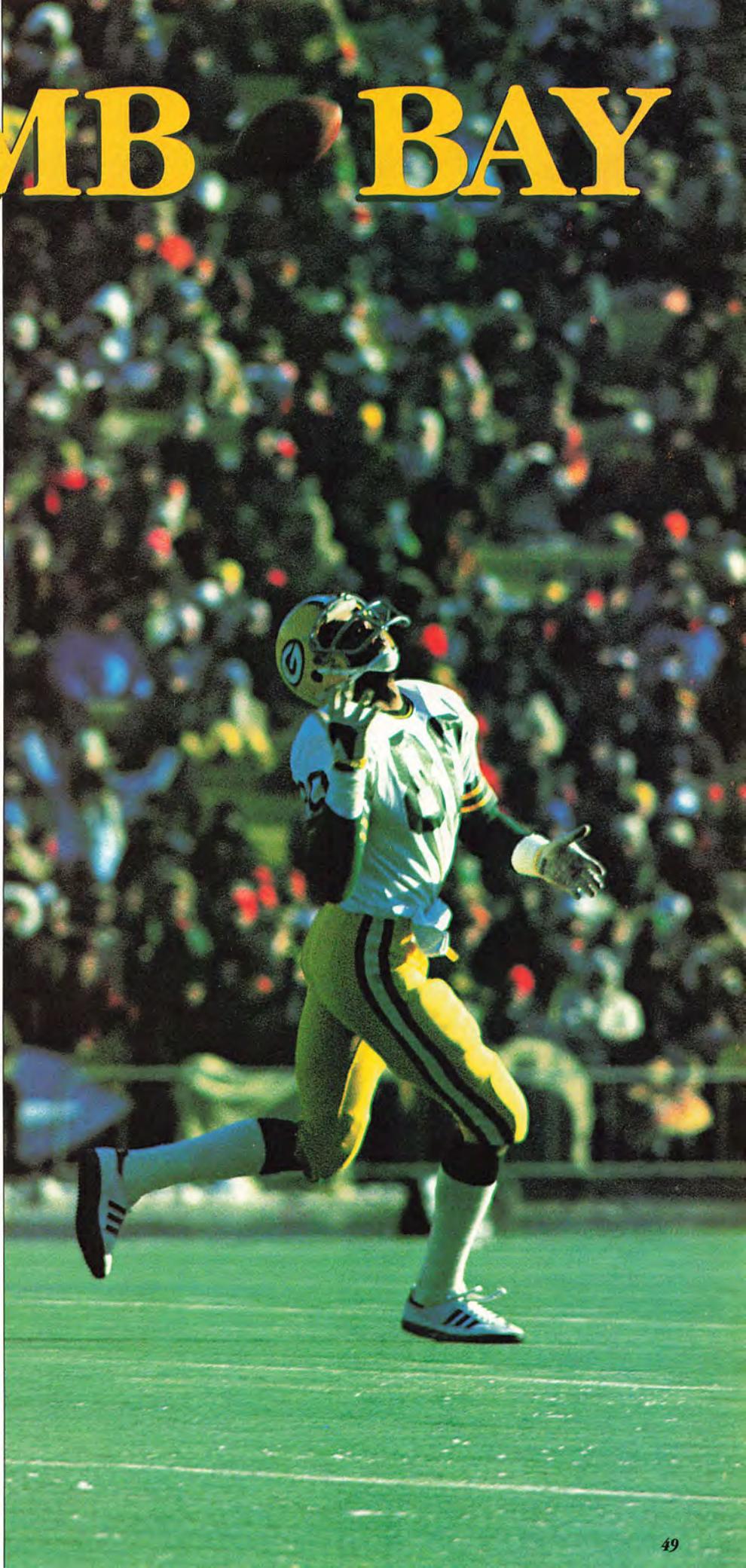
But be careful with your forearms when he runs through your zone on a deep post.

Urbanity stops at the line of scrimmage in Lofton's business. He is a Stanford man of Edwardian bearing and he is a legitimate tycoon, but nobody shoves James Lofton around running downfield for a football.

What he does, in fact, is scare the socks off otherwise fearless creatures who rarely know to blink in the face of onrushing rhinos and natural calamities.

"Lofton made a catch against us in our October game in Green Bay that was just fantastic," said Bud Grant of the Minnesota Vikings. "[Lynn] Dickey's long pass caught the wind a little and veered toward the sideline. Lofton swung his body to adjust in full stride, caught the ball low just before it would have gone out of bounds, swung away from the sidelines, and took the ball almost to the

*Among Lofton's finer points is the ability to adjust his speed and direction before, during, and after a catch.*



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# HOWARD JOHNSON'S

*Check in and check us out!*



*Off the field, Lofton occasionally may affect the pixie; on the field, his manner inspires worry among opponents, electricity among fans.*

goal line before he ran out of adjustments. I've seen a few guys with great hands. I don't know if I've ever seen anybody else with his hands, his size, his speed, and his athletic ability. Just watching him line up makes you worry."

Grant manages to suppress his terror in ways not available to most mortals. But you gather that Lofton warrants very special treatment from NFL defenses. That is why it strikes the opponents of the Green Bay Packers with mounting torment that any offense lining up with Lofton, John Jefferson, and Paul Coffman in the receiving blocks, with Phil Epps shuttling among them and Dickey throwing, violates the principles of fairness and decency.

Those people can score that often, from all the compass points.

And yet there is not much danger that the myth-makers are going to immediately anoint this group as the greatest ever; or reserve suites in the pro football pantheon at Canton for the trophies they are going to win.

The Packers were scratching for respectability when Lofton-Jefferson-Dickey, et al, came together a few years ago.

And they still are. It is marvelous to win a football game 48-47, but sometimes it is almost more marvelous to win two in a row, a humble goal that eluded Green Bay during the first half of the season.

It doesn't lessen the voltage they generate among both spectators and defensive backs every time they appear on the field.

While it's true that pro football is ferocious stares on game day and busted dreams, reeling Packer defenses and Lynn Dickey's scowl, to the crowd it is still entertainment and electricity.

And what could be more electric in American football today than Lofton and Jefferson lining up on the poles of the Green Bay offense; the curly headed bon vivant of the wheat fields, Coffman, in the slot; and the man with that solemn Kansas face and sense of mission with which he plays, Dickey, pulling the trigger for them?

"You're forgetting Epps," Grant said. "They don't lose anything when they throw him out wide and take Coffman out and now you're looking at Lofton, Jefferson, and a guy who is supposed to go 9.2 in the hundred."

They could give the game ball to the guy who starts the mechanical rabbit to get those greyhounds going.

The history book might be more pertinent right here than the playbook. John Jefferson, a.k.a. J.J., came to Green Bay after the kind of three-year career in San Diego that captivated not only the multitudes but the men who lined up with and against him. Almost nobody who played this game caught the football the way J.J. did in San Diego. He did it skidding into the goal post on his nose, leaping for the light standards, and burrowing into linebackers. He was animation and wild soul, an imp and acrobat. Above everything he was a great receiver.

But the Chargers' management and J.J.'s finance minister couldn't agree on a price for his gymnastics. He had to go to another place, somebody said. By accident or design the Chargers found the most improbable place on the North American continent.

That was true partly because people homesick for fiestas rarely find fulfillment on the western shore of Lake Michigan, especially when the ice ar-

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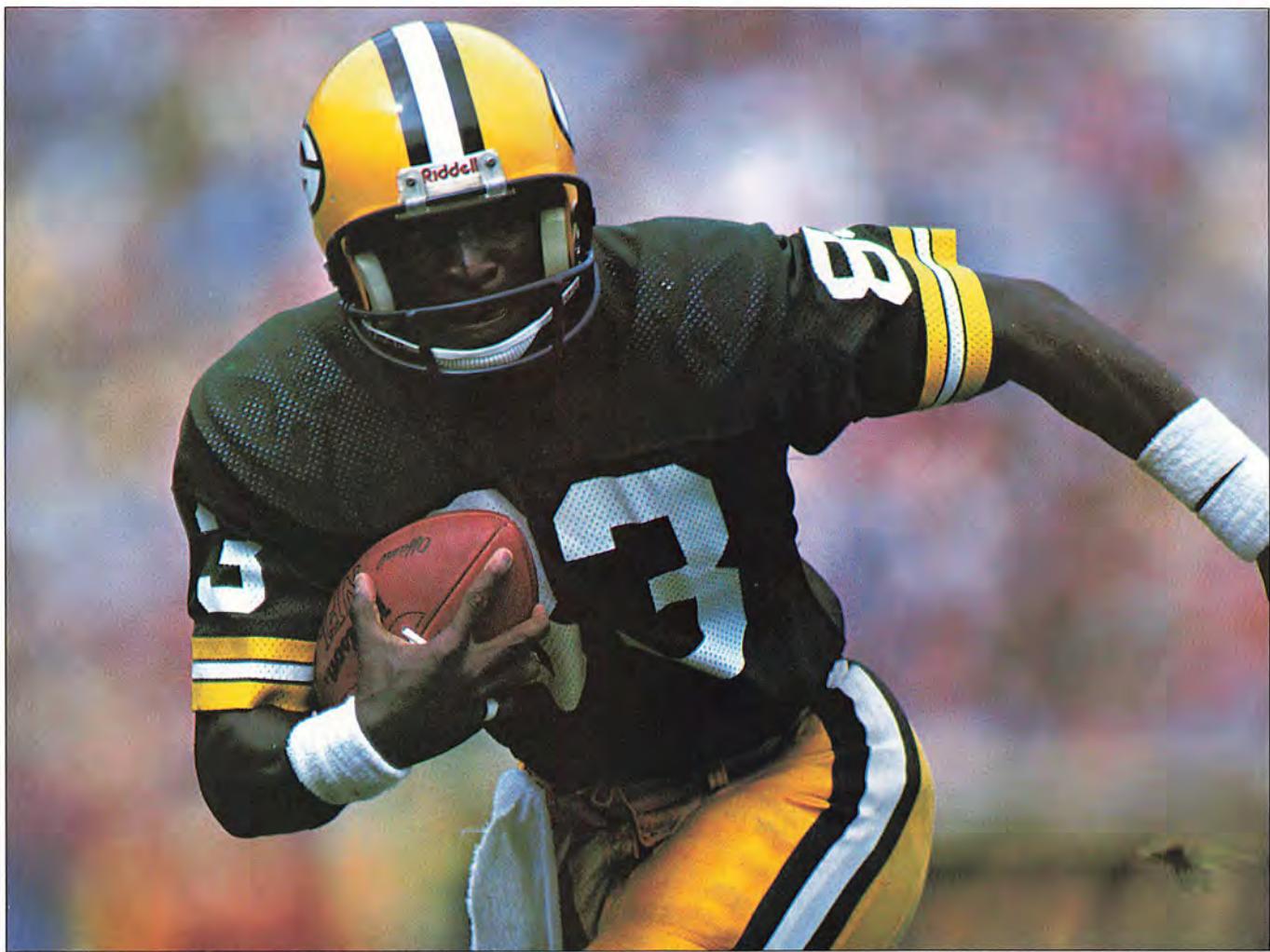


Sarajevo '84



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***Jefferson arrived in Green Bay with Lofton's full blessing, but even that couldn't soften the California-Wisconsin culture shock.***

rives early. More intimately, the wide receiver franchise in Green Bay at the time was owned by Lofton, whose happiness appeared to be all any one quarterback could handle.

But when Bart Starr checked the Tel-ex one last time, there was JJ, designated available.

Starr called Lofton, and they talked.

A couple of years before, Lofton had walked into the Packers' dressing room moments after an overtime loss to Minnesota and slammed his pads as Starr was about to lead the team in postgame prayer. In the player's judgment, they could have won the game except for some cautious tactical decisions late in regulation time.

Starr, a man of form and civility, experienced a private fury.

It passed. And slowly the two grew closer, one a southern gentleman of such magnificent playing history but such constant duress as a coach, the other a glib and strong-minded athletic prodigy.

Today Lofton speaks this way about Starr:

"I know it's normal for a player to talk

in terms of great admiration for the coach when they understand each other. The player will call him a fine this and a fine that. Knowing that, I consider Bart Starr the finest man I know.

"He's a coach, but he's not a ranting and raving coach, and he coaches the game in human terms. He will talk to you and try to explain why this is being done, or that. And he will ask."

In the early fall of 1981, Starr asked Lofton what he thought about Jefferson joining the Packers to catch footballs on a team in which Lofton already caught them as well as anybody could.

"I think at another time in our careers there might have been some difficulty," Lofton said, "especially if we were starting out together. We both had been chosen on the first round of the same draft [Lofton by Green Bay, then Wes Chandler by New Orleans, then John Jefferson by San Diego]. But we both had established ourselves by then. I told Bart that you win with good football players, and John Jefferson was a good football player and if there was a chance to get him for the Packers, we should."

So the Packers dealt wide receiver

Aundra Thompson and a gaggle of draft choices to San Diego. Then they pushed whatever financial buttons the vault-keepers have to push to keep the important egos in balance (in this case Lofton's and Jefferson's), and said, "Welcome to the golden sands of Lake Michigan, JJ."

For a man of JJ's upbringing, it might as well have been the craters of Mars. At least you would have to see it that way on the surface. Here was a guy who grew up in Dallas, went to college in Arizona, and spent three giddy seasons of semi-tropical stardom in San Diego. He got off a plane on a fall day in Wisconsin and walked into a pro football environment that mixes rustic hysteria, clans of sausage-roasters wearing snowsuits and ski masks in the parking lot, and a communal fixation with the green ghosts of Packers past. There wasn't a piñata in sight. On some of the streets there still are remnants of the signs strung out like Christmas ornaments in the early 1960s when they renamed Green Bay "Titletown, U.S.A."

J.J. must have seen Vince Lombardi's summons to Valhalla the first day he walked into Lambeau Field through the

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**Coffman's offseason strength work turned out to be more than "remedial;" in 1979, his second season, the tight end had 56 catches.**

tunnels where Jim Taylor, Jerry Kramer, Willie Davis, Ray Nitschke, and Bart Starr charged to attack the dragons.

"I firmly believe that man's finest hour—his greatest fulfillment to all he holds dear—is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle—victorious," Jefferson said.

Is this a stadium or a mausoleum?

The jaded asphalt-crawlers from the eastern press corps have asked that question, but Jefferson did not.

What Jefferson did, when they introduced him as a starter to the inquisitive Packers masses five days after he arrived, was to leap two feet in the air, swing his arm victoriously and pump, his face glowing with unmistakable joy.

It said JJ. was back in a football uniform, let's you-and-me-be-great-friends, and on with the show.

He caught seven balls his first day, and high-fived everybody but the head linesman. A love affair erupted full blossom in one afternoon.

It has not diminished much, despite the absence of new trophies for the keepers of the eternal fires in the mauso-

leum on Lombardi Avenue.

But if they were expecting a motor-mouth character and a 24-hour-a-day hotdog, what they got was something remarkably different.

"I don't think I've ever seen a more unselfish football player than JJ.," Starr said. "All of that energy he shows in the game. His interaction with the players and crowds, is real. Football turns him on that way. It's the kind of enthusiasm that transmits immediately to everybody around him because it's coming from a man who is so obviously gifted and so obviously a worker. Every receiver likes to catch the ball a lot. That's their trade ...what they're paid for. But neither JJ. nor the others in that receiving group ever has shown the slightest sign of rivalry, so that, quite apart from the success they've had, they've developed a mutual respect and unity of goals that are genuine."

And while it's true that the mausoleum harbors few living saints, an uncommon number of people who play for Starr end up talking and acting like Jack Armstrong.

Away from the crunch of pads and the

fingernail catches, JJ. leads no snake dances through the streets of Green Bay. Socially he is not one of those breathless boulevardiers who is smothered by life in the Middle American provinces.

"I never needed excitement and bright lights away from football," he said. "I live here with my family. I'm a pretty quiet sort of person. To wind down, I spend a lot of time watching television, and I get some kidding about that."

Why would you kid JJ. about his television tastes?

"I like some of the soap operas."

Back it up, JJ. Does the AFC-NFC Pro Bowl Alumni Club house a closet "Guiding Light" freak?

"The other network."

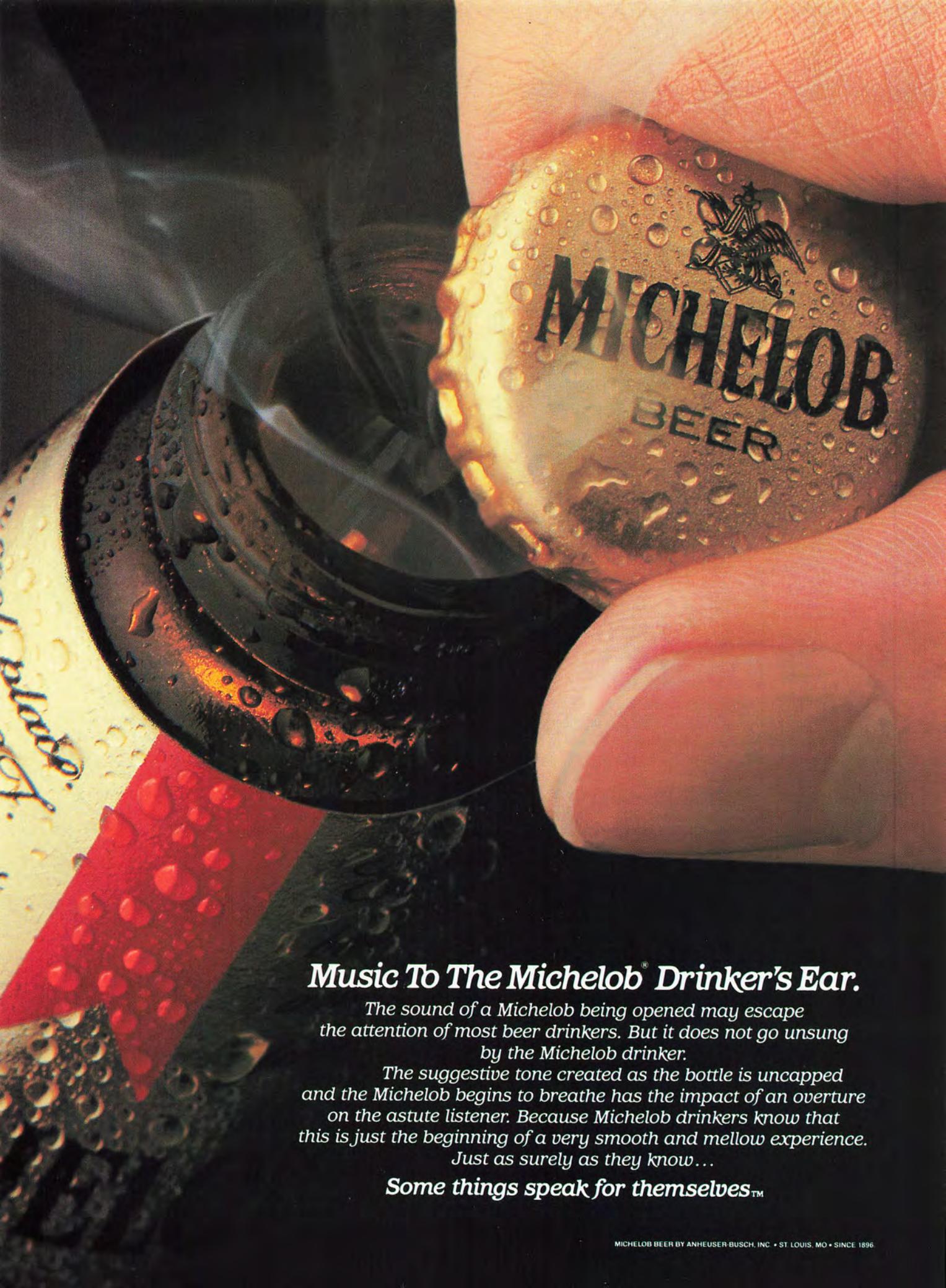
Ah, we've got it narrowed. "All My Children."

"It's actually not so bad."

It's actually better than watching replays of Lawrence Taylor and A.J. Duhe devouring wide receivers on flanker screens.

Lofton has said this of Jefferson:

"When people ask me about his best qualities as a football player, I have to



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# PACKERS' LYNN DICKEY: THE TRIGGER-HAPPY QUARTERBACK

In the middle of the most apoplectic hour of the 1983 pro football season, the Green Bay Packers' 48-47 victory over the Washington Redskins in an October 17 ping-pong drama, Lynn Dickey trotted to his bench after a Packers touchdown and winked to the world.

The Packers' quarterback was not trying to convey any gamesman streak of vengeance or God-almighty sense of triumph.

It just happened to be the moment when Dickey arrived closest to uncorrugated bliss in 13 years in a pro football uniform, and the big Kansan who once turned the nation's hospitals into his personal homestead just wanted to share the rapture.

This is a football man. He does not see life in the huddle as a building block to some higher destiny on a Hollywood sound stage or in a corporate boardroom. There are a lot of practitioners of this muscular art who, in midcareer, decide it is a tedious intrusion on their time and an irrational way to conduct the business of self-fulfillment.

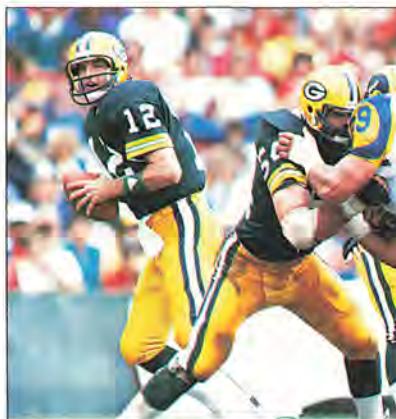
Dickey comes from Kansas, which is where John Riggins came from, and, when you think about it, Wyatt Earp. If you want philosophy and a search for personal discovery, look up the guys from California. If you want to talk football, ring Dickey's doorbell in Green Bay (or Lenexa, Kansas, where they conduct very few advanced seminars on personal discovery).

This is a rational family man of clear intelligence and uncomplicated values who makes no apology for getting emotionally juiced by an 80-yard drive or raillery in the locker room.

Money, yeah that. You would have to believe the Green Bay Packers pay Dickey a lot of money to fling those long tight spirals the aficionados drool about in the analysts' booth. But suddenly in the middle of October here was the football equivalent of O.K. Corral in living rooms from Key West to Anchorage, and this time nobody was calling him the last survivor of Dien Bien Phu or running out to pin the Purple Heart on his green shirt and present him with an honorary bottle of plasma from his fan club in the traction ward.

Instead, millions of people took a few unabashed hours simply to marvel at Dickey, virtuoso quarterback, hooked up in irresistible battle of run-and-gun with Joe Theismann. Nobody was talking about Dickey, animated cadaver, and mourning the might-have-beens, as though, when you bring up Dickey's name, you always have to do it on a condolence card.

So he wasn't mobile. So what? He played like a man liberated from all the morbid imagery of Lynn Dickey Past because this was the kind of football game—and it hardly was isolated from his last three years of stewardship in Green Bay—that he and his admirers envisioned when he came out



of Kansas 13 years ago with his powerful arm and headfull of ambitions under that massive pack of ringlets.

He finished dinner with his wife Sherry and his three kids before a football game in Green Bay a couple of weeks ago, and talked about it. "I can't separate my career from all those injuries and the pain and all that dead time I spent," he acknowledged. "It was bad but it's really part of the game, it happens, and it happened to me. But how the pro football fans look at me does matter. It does mean something to be considered one of the best. Subconsciously I compare myself with the other quarterbacks in this business. I think most of us do. I don't just mean whether I deserve some honor. That stuff comes and goes and there's not much you can do to control it."

So what is in the subconscious of the quarterback from Green Bay and Lenexa? Acceptance as a truly great one—not as a footnoted, asterisked potentially great one?

"Maybe something like that," Dickey said. "But the reward in football is winning, and winning means everybody on the team. You don't want to spend a lot of time looking at it as a 'me' thing. When the season started I thought our chances looked good. But it bothered me to hear some of our people start talking about Super Bowl this and Super Bowl that as though we were already in it. It's great to play with confidence, but we had a lot of premature talk. After a few weeks people couldn't figure us out, we were so damned unpredictable. I think it proved the time to talk is after you've delivered something."

When Dickey talks in Green Bay, he tends to hold listeners' attention, particularly if they wear gold hats and green shirts. Never has that been more emphatic than now, in a season Dickey began with 16 touchdown passes in the first seven games and an extraordinary completion record of 66 percent—extraordinary because with James Lofton and John Jefferson on the flanks, bunches

of those passes were aimed 30, 40, and 50 yards downfield. So there is a peer respect for this large-shouldered and purposeful Kansan that reaches well beyond their admiration for his raw survival and pain threshold.

Eddie Lee Ivery, the running back who himself is no novice in the world of bedpans and catheter tubes, described Dickey's presence on the team.

"Seeing him play that game against Houston [when Dickey led the Packers' victory despite savage headaches caused by reaction to neck treatment] was an indication of how important Lynn is to this football team," Ivery said. "Seeing him play and play as well as he did, feeling as sick as he did, makes you want to excel yourself and to do better. I can't tell you how much I respect him. It seems I want to do better just for him, because I respect him. The leadership qualities he has are remarkable, especially in the way he has control of the offensive team on and off the field."

"He'll help you during the game. If he sees something, he'll come over to me on the sidelines and point it out. Once he calls a play in the huddle, he'll say something like, 'Be alert for dogs [red dogs], be alert for your breakoff.' It means he's concentrating not only on what he has to do, but on our assignments, too. He's just a guy who's on his toes all the time, knowing what's going on on the football field."

This mutual care did not inhibit the autocratic quarterback from firing a helmet at the retreating backsides of the Packers' offensive line after one horrendous series not long ago.

Nor did it mean that Dickey is impervious to the psychological roller coaster that big-time athletics impose on most of its celebrity stars, Kansan or Californian. In the midst of the aching convalescence from one of his fractures, he began exploring a career in business, nearly convinced there was something screwed up about either his zodiac or the quality of his corpuscles and bone marrow. It took him just one or two visions of Lynn Dickey, desk commando, before he changed his mind and went back to his weights and pulleys. A few years later, victimized by the Rams' pass defense, he said publicly he was not the man to lead the Green Bay Packers back to the throne vacated by Vince Lombardi and Bart Starr.

Starr might have had some random thoughts about Starr's capacity to do the same thing. But he talked Dickey out of his gloom, and, whatever the course of the Packers' struggles in 1983, the man from Kansas with the measured speech and direct eyes is unmistakably in command of his football team.

He wants to wear no ribbons, purple or other. But he does pack a considerable gun.

—Jim Klobuchar

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**Epps barely was drafted and was a puzzle to receivers coach Lew Carpenter until his receptions and runbacks began to pile up.**

remind them that I see him every day. He does so many things well, the way he catches the ball, his ability to get open, always willing to catch the ball in traffic. But I see him do those things every day, so to me it is the ordinary thing you expect of him. But I also know they're not ordinary at all. He's a tremendous athlete and football player."

J.J. is the weaver and the skitterer, bounding and twisting. Speed? Yes. But not quite speed the way Lofton refines it with that sleekness of movement, and then acceleration that seems to spring out almost on a whim.

"The man [Lofton] seems to run as fast as he has to," said Bob Schnelker, the Packers' offensive coordinator. "I mean that in the best sense. He runs under control, and he runs intelligently. But if it's going to be a foot race, there aren't many people around who have a chance to catch him. I've never seen a better wide receiver in all the years I've watched and played football. They double cover him, sure, the way you double cover any great receiver. We try to get him involved as much as we can outside the normal routes he runs. Reverses,

gadget plays, that stuff. Anytime you get him the ball you've got a potential touchdown. The best thing about this guy is that he plays the way he practices. Every play in practice is a precision thing for him. Which is why he does it that way so often in the game."

Which offers an interesting invitation to the psychologist.

If Lofton is the best wide receiver in football today, which is not hard to argue, it means he is the best wide receiver in Green Bay. And what does that mean to Jefferson?

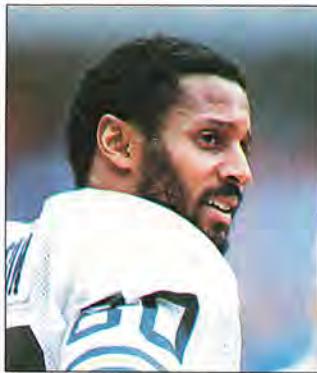
"I consider myself number two," J.J. said. "I think I play this game very well and I have a lot to contribute, but he was here when I got here and he's a great receiver. We're different. He goes deep better. He's got everything for that. I can go deep, but my best role is being the possession receiver. That means the shorter stuff. There's really not much difference in our statistics. There are plenty of balls to go around."

But only one each time they line up, and is that a problem for Dickey?

"Why should it be a problem?" Dickey said. "We've got three Pro Bowl receiv-

ers, and good ones behind them, but they all want to win, and if you're talking about performance clauses in their contracts, that never crosses my mind. Hell, I've got performance clauses in my own contract. If every time you got into the huddle you started thinking about somebody's statistics, including your own, you'd be a basket case. You'd also lose a lot of football games. I think our offensive scheme is imaginative, and we've got a lot of versatility. But basically we don't line up differently from the other teams, and there's not much you can do to hide what we're trying to do. It comes down to something like this: If you can get the ball often to guys like Lofton, Jefferson, and Coffman, you're going to score often."

Which the Packers sometimes do incessantly. Their enemies will tell you that while Schnelker's ingenuity and unpredictability have introduced a new element to the Packers' passing game the last couple of years, in the fundamentals of formation and attack the Green Bay offense is not especially complicated. They aren't going to try to baffle you a lot with motion, reverse mo-



**Lofton: incomparable.**

tion, and motion-motion.

What does make it different from many offenses is the price the defense will pay when it cannot adequately pressure Dickey. This is the strong-willed veteran of high competence and powerful arm, and much prestige in the huddle. But he has none of the tools of evasion when the carnivores of the defensive lines come after him. He lost those to a broken leg, mangled hip, dislocations, the whole litany of abuse. Granted time to throw to his all-pros, he can turn the game into a classroom. He did against the Redskins, nearly 400 yards worth. But a week later the Vikings came at him with a four-man rush on practically every down, with some blitzers, and with five defensive backs on the field practically all afternoon.

Dickey still threw for more than 300 yards and two touchdowns.

But the Vikings also sacked him seven times. The Packers scored 17 points, and when you play defense the way they play it in Green Bay, that put you in the nowhere column.

If that means temporary gloom in Titletown, it does not extend to Paul Coffman for long.

He will mourn a defeat as long as required in the lodge by-laws, but there is a sort of town-and-country effervescence about this guy that helps make him an intriguing study in a business that not many people enter anonymously.

Coffman did. You can forget about those magic pro computers that instantly survey and classify every American male whoever put a bird cage over his face. The Packers didn't draft him and they never telephoned. They sent no contracts and no agents, not even a questionnaire asking about personal hygiene. Every time they came to Kansas State six years ago to run linebacker Gary Spani through a tryout, Coffman horned in. They finally summoned him to Green Bay because they needed bodies to fill out a mini-camp.

Do you know how unwanted 212-



**Jefferson: unselfish.**

pound tight ends survive the daily cut?

"I didn't think I had a prayer staying on at that weight," he said. "So before I got on the scale I'd go into the training room and get a five-pound weight and slip it into my supporter."

Wait a minute.

They may be trusting people in the Green Bay weight room but they can't be blind.

"I'd put on a pair of those floppy green shorts," Coffman said, "and you couldn't tell there was anything wrong. Burt Gustafson, who's in charge of pro personnel for the Packers, did the weighing. I'm sure he didn't catch on."

Gustafson is sure he did, but one way or other they recorded Coffman at 217 pounds long enough for the coaches to discover that this fellow wanted to play pro football so badly, and was ready to sacrifice so completely for it, that the rough-cobbled catching and blocking skills he brought to the game deserved some attention.

He made the club behind Rick McGeorge, and he played mostly on the suicide brigades. Coffman didn't catch a ball, but they liked him. In winter they flew him to Arizona for remedial strength work. He got bulkier, faster, a little meaner, and smarter.

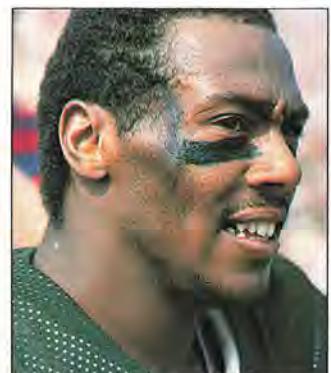
By September of the next year, McGeorge was gone, and Coffman went on to catch 56 balls in his second season. He was playing in the AFC-NFC Pro Bowl in his fifth year, the only tight end who ever majored in grain milling in college.

"I don't have the faintest idea if I'll ever have a chance to use it," he said, "but life is good. You can't imagine how good. I remember the first year I played. I had gone in on short yardage against the Vikings, and I looked up and saw [defensive end] Jim Marshall.

"I was twenty-one and he was forty-one. I just sort of gulped. I remember watching him play when I was in junior high. It took a while to get over that, and it also took a while to get over seeing those Super Bowl rings on all the



**Coffman: "unwanted."**



**Epps: impatient.**

coaches. I don't know why we haven't been able to put it all together, but I know on certain days we can play super football. That's a goal I carry every Sunday afternoon."

Sometimes in Green Bay they wonder if it might not be a sly idea for the scouting department to pass up the first 16 hours of the player draft. They never did draft Coffman and on the twelfth round last year they picked out Phil Epps from Texas Christian. After watching him a few weeks the receiving coach, Lew Carpenter, wasn't quite sure whether Epps had a chance to become another Cliff Branch, Alfred Jenkins, or Billy (White Shoes) Johnson.

Then Epps started running back punts and catching Dickey's best shots, and Carpenter asked himself a second question: "Why compare him with anybody else? If you can run with world-class speed like this guy, and still play football, what's wrong with being Phil Epps?"

Absolutely nothing. Epps is just marginally impatient. He's young, he is playing with and behind two of the best in decades, and he will play more. So will Gary Lewis, the number-two tight end behind Coffman, who if he doesn't catch a ball all year can make it as the kick-blocking goaltender of pro football.

And yet on this football team, allowing for Dickey's indispensable leadership in the huddle and on the firing line, Lofton is the main man. At the important times, he talks for the team and to it. The mid-80s are prime time for him, in the maturity he has acquired, in the community involvement he has stepped into, and above all in his Sunday afternoons. He has begun a second life as a Milwaukee businessman, and a third one as a television personality with his wife Beverly, a vibrant woman with a background in acting and singing.

"In college," he said, "she was a speech pathologist. That means she can correct my grammar and my speech at the same time."

But rarely on Sunday.

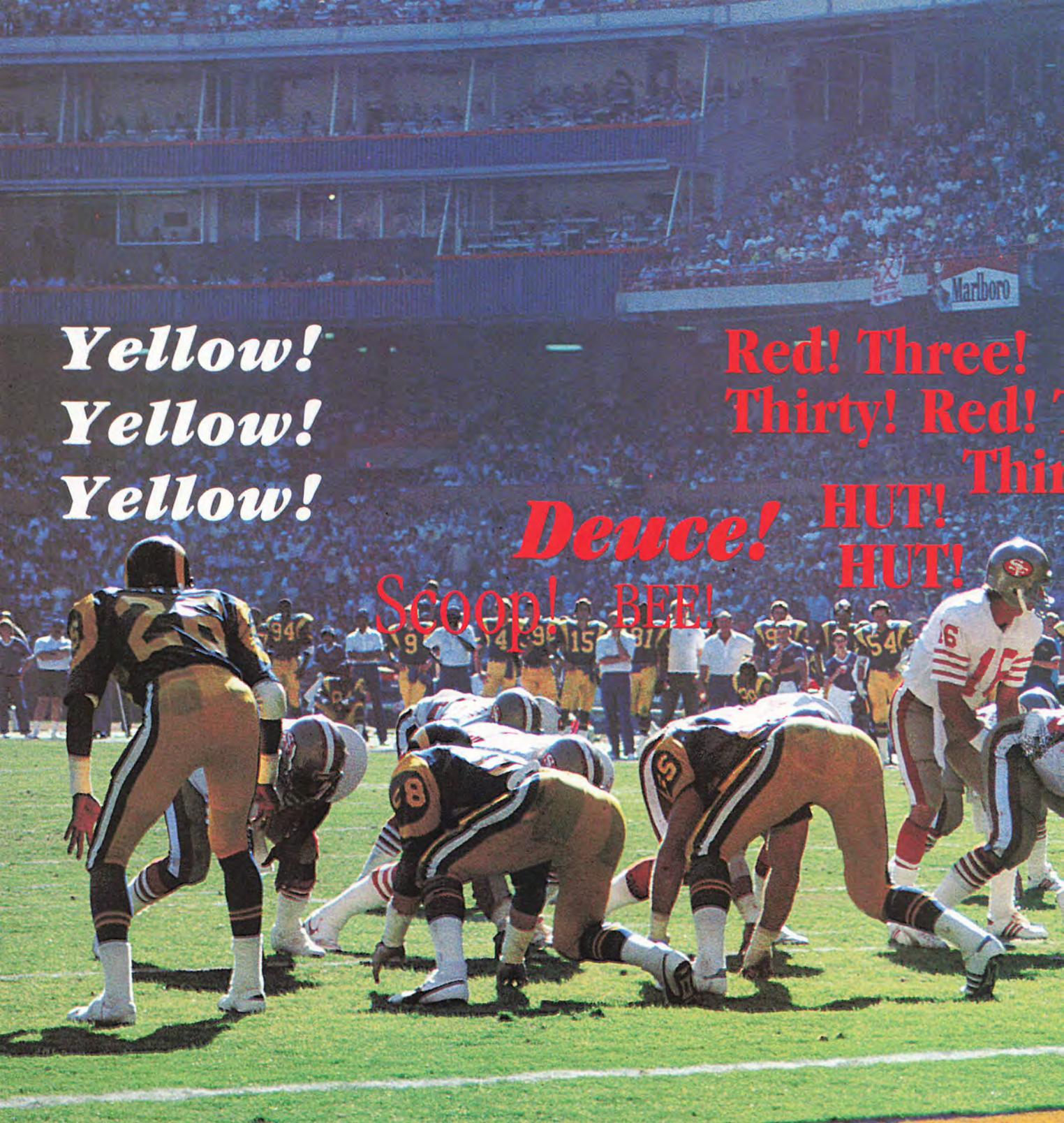


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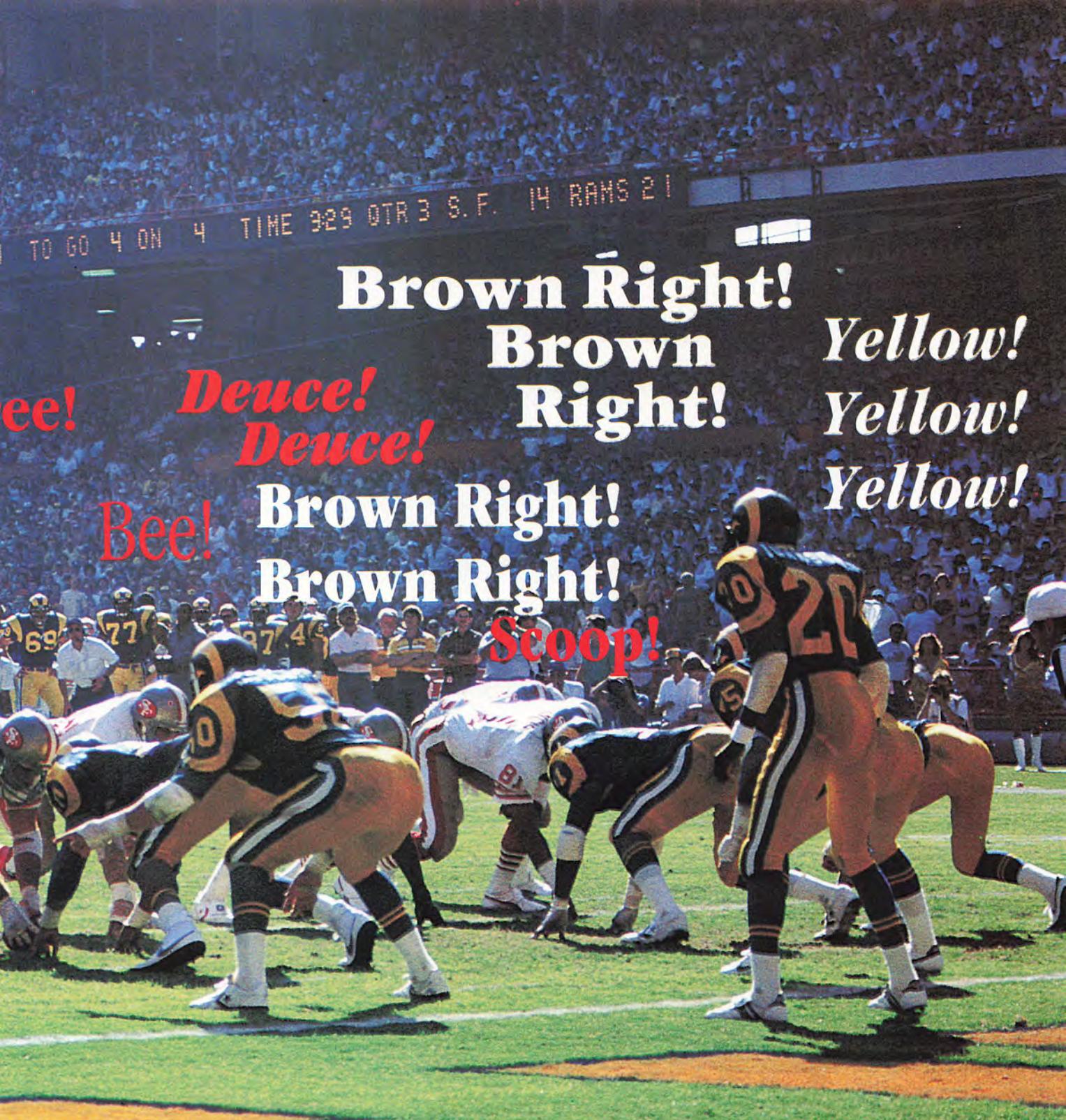
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# Little Idle Chatter, No Small Talk

*Pro Football Communication: What They're Saying  
(and How They Say It), From Game Plan Through Game Day*      *By Kevin Lamb*



**T**he coach told the play messenger to call Play 17. The messenger told the quarterback to call Play 17. "Seventeen," the quarterback told the huddle. "On two."

The quarterback had called the wrong play.

The head coach, Mike Ditka of the Chicago Bears, had not meant for quarterback Jim

McMahon to call Play 17 from the playbook. McMahon was wearing a wrist strap, as many quarterbacks do, with numbers corresponding to various playbook plays in the game plan. Ditka had meant number 17 from the list.

Both plays were passes. As it turned out, the one McMahon threw in an early game this season was intercepted in

the end zone, killing a drive. "Communications breakdown," Ditka said afterwards.

It happens to everyone. On any given Sunday, a pro football team communicates enough information to stretch from goal line to goal line on microfilm.

Just listen. On the sideline alone, coaches are communicating with other coaches up-

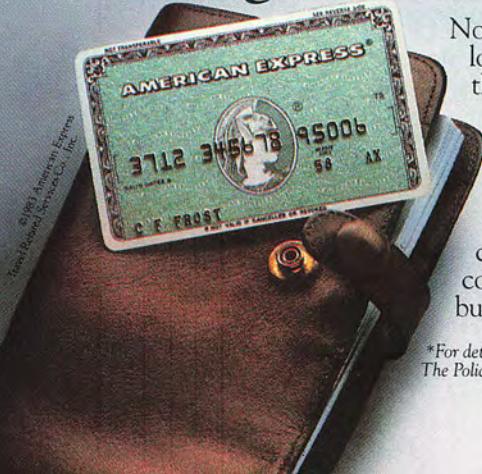
stairs in the press box and with substitutes at their elbows. They are sending offensive plays and defensive deployments to their teams' huddles. After the huddles break, players are telling each other how they'll react to the way the other team has lined up.

A play might be channeled from the offensive coordinator in the coaches' box to the



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head coach on the sideline to the play messenger to the quarterback to the huddle to the players again on the line of scrimmage (in an audible). Eleven people's assignments must be communicated six times within 30 seconds. Even a Federal Express commercial could not squeeze 66 player assignments into 30 seconds.

So football teams communicate in code. The simpler, the better. That was why the Bears used the wrist strap, ordinarily a fine idea. The ball-point pen ordinarily is a fine idea, too, but sometimes it ruins a shirt.

"Not a damn thing is perfect," says Sid Gillman, a long-time innovator among coaches.

As Packers head coach Bart Starr says, "That's why they call us humans."

**I**t all starts with the game plan. The players receive a new game plan every Wednesday. By Sunday, they should know their assignments as instinctively as their own telephone numbers.

In essence, a team's own playbook and its opponent's latest game films are distilled through a computer to produce a game plan. It is not just a list of plays. It is dozens of lists of plays.

There is a list of offensive plays for first-and-10 between the 30-yard lines against a 3-4 defense. There is a list of plays for third-and-long against a Nickel defense inside the team's own 20. And so on.

By NFL rule, a team has films of its opponent's last three games. By practice, it might have film of as many as six games. The information taken from that film is fed into a computer, which sorts the opponent's offensive and defensive plays to determine its tendencies in specific situations.

First, the plays are sorted into down and distance, the distances being short, medium, and long, medium being three to six yards. Each of

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*Third base coaches have done it for as long as anyone can remember. The principle is the same in football; there are valid signals and dummy signals.*

---

those categories is broken down further into field position, perhaps using the 5s, 20s, and 30s as lines of demarcation. Finally, each of those categories is broken into ways the players line up.

Suppose the computer says the opponent's offense, on first-and-10, lines up in an I-formation 72 percent of the time, runs on 82 percent of those I-formation plays, and runs to the right on 77 percent of those I-formation runs. The defensive game plan is going to call for a run defense stacked on its left side on first-and-10.

Unless the opponent lines up in a split backfield. Then it tends to pass, especially to the tight end. In that case, the defense will put its linemen in a pass rush and double-cover the tight end.

Except when he goes in motion. The opponent likes to give the fullback the ball for a quick opener up the middle when the tight end goes in motion from a split backfield. The defensive coordinator makes a note: Don't let Mac follow the tight end in motion.

Mac is the strong inside linebacker who would vacate the fullback's running lane if he follows the tight end. Every position has a three- or four-letter code name.

That is what a defensive game plan looks like. Situation, opponent's tendency, our response. It can go on for 30 or 40 pages.

An offensive game plan is shorter, partly because a defense cannot present as many variables as an offense and partly because offensive strategy isn't entirely dependent on what a defense does. The

offense is mainly concerned with down, distance, and field position.

The offensive coordinator tells himself: If they do this, which they tend to do against the formation we're going to use in this situation, we like these plays. These runs, these dropback passes, these play-action passes, and these "deceptives"—a catch-all for screens, draws, reverses, and

He also considers the opponent's personnel. Say their defensive left end is not so tough to block toward the inside, but a load to cut off on a play away from him. Let's put in a couple more sweeps to the right.

An offensive game plan is going to have some plays that don't change from week to week. The team might call them its dirty dozen or nitty gritty or super-ready list. If the defense breaks its characteristics, these plays still should work.

**B**y Sunday, coaches know what they're going to call in any situation. They haven't learned how to coach telepathy, though, so they have to find another way to transmit their information to their players.

The trend is toward using hand signals instead of messengers. But the bandwagon is far from full. Tom Landry tried signaling offensive plays for half a season and went back to messengers. Sid Gillman always has favored an offense too intricate to reduce to hand signals. Paul Brown remains the proud father of the messenger system.

"A lot of times a messenger

can give information you can't give with a signal," says John Mackovic, the Kansas City head coach who was Landry's assistant for two years. "Say you want to tell them to be ready for a blitz. It's hard to signal in any kind of alert like that."

Defenses almost always use hand signals. Their calls are shorter, with blanks that a linebacker must fill in after the offense shows a formation. A defensive coordinator signals in no more than the line's alignment, the run responsibility, the pass coverage, and maybe a blitz.

A typical offensive play call might go: "Green Left wing motion dive 28 G twist on two." It includes the formation (Green Left), the motion (wing), the playbook series (dive), the back and his running hole (2 is the halfback; 8 is around left end on most teams, right end on some), the blocking scheme (G twist), and the snap count (two). That is a lot of hand signals.

But would you want to trust all that to a messenger, either? A player has been trained, when he hears a play, to think immediately of his own assignment. So if the messenger is a wide receiver, as he steps over the sideline, he is not going to be thinking "Green Left wing motion" and so forth. He is going to be thinking about how far he should split from the line, who he should block, how he might have to adjust his route if the play is a pass.

A smart player can translate it all back into the proper play by the time he reaches the huddle. But not all NFL players can do that.

Several things can happen if a confused messenger reaches the huddle. Maybe it won't matter. Maybe the quarterback will know his game plan well enough to call a proper play. But maybe he won't, or maybe the messenger will give a wrong play that is just close enough to something else to give the quarterback some doubt. That is



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*It shows you've come to play.*



when a quarterback throws his hands up in a disgusted time-out sign without breaking the huddle.

It can be worse. Sometimes a messenger garbles the play but delivers it with authority. The quarterback has barked his first "Hut!" with the 30-second clock down to 4, by the time it dawns on him that the play he has called does not exist.

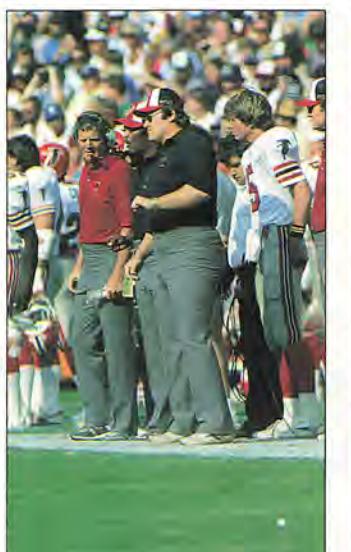
Or maybe it can't be run from the formation he has called. And nobody realizes that until the quarterback turns to hand the ball to the fullback, who is heading into the line to block for the halfback, who is hitting the quarterback from behind and knocking the ball loose.

That happens. So proponents of hand signals are cutting out the middle man. A quarterback can misread a signal, too, but at least he has been to more strategy meetings than a shuttling guard or wide receiver.

A team that signals offensive plays often has its quarterback call the formation, blocking scheme, and snap count. It signals only the motion, the series, and the back and hole or pass pattern. A team can shift the burden off a messenger that way, too, but signaling the play gives the quarterback more time to recall the formation and the blocking scheme. If the signal-caller is too slow calling the play, the pressure really is on the quarterback, and often he will be forced to call a time out.

Time is the biggest advantage of hand signals. As Gillman says, "A quarterback likes to get a play as quickly as he can. Now the machinery begins to work. What are my reads if it's a pass? Under what conditions should I audible if it's a run? The more time he has to think about it, the better he'll be prepared for anything that goes wrong."

Signaling not only gives the quarterback more time to call an audible, if it's advisable, but lets the coach keep his



*Atlanta Falcons assistant coaches flash real and dummy signals.*

substitutes on the sideline longer. As soon as the offense makes its replacements, it narrows down its possible formations. Three wide receivers tips the defensive coordinator off to a pass.

That is why the defensive coordinator appreciates the speed of signaling at the other end of the 30 seconds. Sometimes he even can wait until after the offense has lined up to substitute and signal in a coverage.

A more obvious advantage of signaling is that it does not require substituting. There are units that like their best 11 players well enough to keep them in on successive plays.

Signaling is not new. Brown recalls doing some of it when he coached Massillon (Ohio) High School in the 1930s. Signaling's professional currency rose in the early 1960s, when the NFL roster limit dropped from 38 to 36 in 1961 and the AFL limit dropped from 35 to 33 in 1962. "You'd get an injury, and you didn't have the players to shuttle," says Jack Faulkner, the Los Angeles Rams' administrator of football operations and the AFL coach of the year in 1962 while with the Denver Broncos.

Of course, third base coaches have done it as long as anyone can remember. The principle is the same in football: The coach gives a number of meaningless dummy signals, then an indicator that means



the next signal counts. Or the third signal will count on one possession, the second one next time. The San Francisco 49ers, Atlanta Falcons, and the San Diego Chargers confuse opponents by having a second coach give dummy signals.

Despite the precautions, signals probably are stolen more often than we are told. It isn't the sort of thing coaches advertise.

Not until Mike Ditka became the Bears' head coach in 1982 did the word slip out that the Bears had stolen Green Bay's offensive signs in a 61-7 victory in 1980. Ditka spilled the beans. The Bears had known whether the Packers would run or pass.

It was useful information. Still, Ditka cautions against "sitting there listening to what they're calling instead of playing football." Buddy Ryan, the Bears' defensive coordinator, says any defensive intelligence that does not involve draws and screens is overrated. He grants the value of an offense's picking up an opponent's blitz signal, something the Jets did when he coached for them. It didn't do them much good, though. As Ryan recalls, someone would blow a whistle when a blitz was on, but quarterback Joe Namath couldn't hear the whistle.

One of the best-known signal-stealing stories involves the 1979 AFC Divisional Play-

off Game in which the Houston Oilers upset the San Diego Chargers 17-14 with rookie safety Vernon Perry intercepting four passes. After the game, linebacker Gregg Bingham credited assistant coach Wade Phillips with picking up the Chargers' signals and letting him know whether they would run or pass.

"It made a nice story for us," says Phillips, now with the New Orleans Saints. "It made us look a lot smarter than we were."

The Oilers' coaches hadn't stolen San Diego's signs, but they weren't dumb, either. They had watched the film of San Diego's previous game, against Denver, and Phillips says, "Every time they ran the ball, Denver's linebackers raised their hands up in the air before the play. We knew they had something. We didn't know what it was. So one of our coaches talked to one of their players."

It turned out quarterback Dan Fouts was tipping the plays. He stood with his feet square before runs, but one was staggered behind the other before passes. "Bingham didn't want to tell the truth," Phillips says, "because he thought we might play them again." The truth is out now because Fouts's foot is no longer an unwitting communicator.

**P**aul Brown began shuttling plays to his huddle in the early 1940s, when he coached at Ohio State. His messenger guards at Cleveland have included some memorable names: Steelers coach Chuck Noll, Jim Ray Smith, Gene Hickerson, and John Wooten. But his favorite anecdote involves Lin Houston at guard and George Ratnerman at quarterback.

"Houston went in with a play," Brown recalls, "and told George the play. Now George was something of a jester. He answered back, 'I don't like that play. Go get another one.'

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"Well, Houston turned right around and started running back to the sideline. He was about six feet out of the huddle when he turned around again, went back to George and said, 'Go tell him yourself.'

"Now I'm on the sideline. I don't know what's happening in the huddle, but all of a sudden I saw the whole football team out there laughing. I never thought anything was very funny during a football game, so I couldn't understand this. But when they told me about it later, I got a laugh out of it, too."

Brown coached long enough ago to remember when coaches weren't allowed to communicate with players on the field. It was a 15-yard penalty at one time. "Then when we could communicate, the question was how to do it without interrupting the game. I decided to alternate guards because they did nothing in terms of touching the football, the intricate aspects of that."

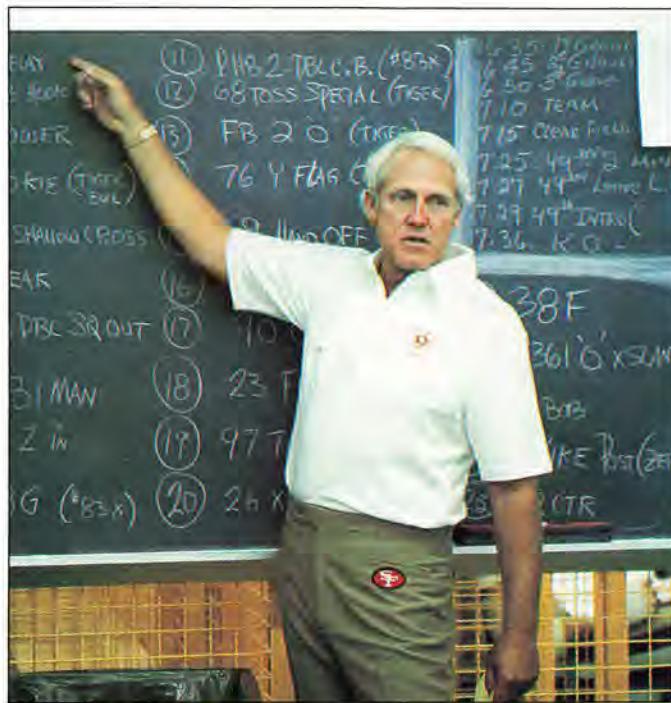
Some teams still alternate guards, although shuttling wide receivers or tight ends is more prevalent.

Faulkner, a proponent of hand signals, says if he were coaching against a team that alternated guards, "I'd put my best defensive linemen on them. They'd be worn out."

Whoever shuttles, he has to practice it. Most shuttling teams also shuttle their practice plays. They don't all have the luxury Hickerson had when he forgot a play against the St. Louis Cardinals in 1959. "We had Jim Brown," he says. "So I called Jim Brown on a running play. He broke it for about twenty-five or thirty yards and Paul Brown never said a thing about it."

Aside from accuracy, speed is the next important ingredient in shuttling. Streamlining the call—letting the quarterback take care of the formation and blocking scheme or giving him a numbered play list—can help forestall delay-of-game penalties.

Even so, the play-calling



***Head coach Bill Walsh gives the 49ers his list of opening plays.***

coach can't be deliberating over his next selection while the quarterback waits expectantly, tapping his foot to the ticking of the 30-second clock. Mackovic made it through the Chiefs' early season games without a messenger-related delay penalty because, he says, "Usually my play is on its way before the referee finishes marking the ball."

In 1956, the NFL allowed quarterbacks to wear citizens band-type receivers in their helmets. Brown liked the idea at first but says, "It never really worked. They had a lot of fun with it, if you know what I mean." He laughs at the memory of the Giants' claiming to intercept his transmissions to Ratterman in a game at New York. "We didn't even have it in his helmet," Brown says.

The Rams tapped into Lions quarterback Bobby Layne's helmet at Detroit, though. Faulkner was there, as Gillman's assistant. The listener was an injured center named Bob Griffin, who sat on a chair on the sideline and reported the Lions' play to a de-

"We stopped everything they did in the first half," Faulkner recalls. "Then a player comes over to our sideline,

everybody moved, and Sid nearly tripped over Griffin's chair. He threw it away. When Griffin sat down, he fell to the ground and his damn receiver broke. We were looking for parts the whole second half, and Detroit came back and beat us."

The way teams substitute these days, Mackovic says, one of the main responsibilities of a messenger "is to tell them who stays on the field and who goes." Depending on down, distance, and field position, teams can use anywhere from three to five defensive linemen, zero to four linebackers, four to seven defensive backs, zero to three tight ends, one to two running backs, and one to four wide receivers. A shuttling tight end might replace a back, a wide receiver, or another tight end.

A frequently overlooked aspect of communication is listening. The players in a huddle have to know whether they're supposed to stay or go. Against Minnesota in 1981, Dallas fullback Ron Springs thought Landry had sent in a formation with one back and two tight ends. He didn't find out until too late.

that Landry had wanted the second tight end to replace a wide receiver instead of a back.

Quarterback Danny White found out when he turned around to give the ball to Springs. Springs wasn't there, so he gave it to Tony Dorsett, the only back he could find. Dorsett ran for a 99-yard touchdown. The longest run in NFL history came out of a 10-man formation.

If White and Dorsett hadn't reacted so quickly, the play could have been a safety. Teammates tend to bump into each other when they run a play from the wrong formation.

On some teams, it is one assistant coach's primary job to make sure the correct players are on the field.

A team's substitutions help an opposing coach determine his next call, remember, so substituting can become a chess match. In a game at Philadelphia, the Bears' Buddy Ryan sent in the people for his 5-1-5 with his 4-2-5 Nickel defense. The Eagles had to use a time out.

That roulette game is stacked against the offense, because it needs more time to set up. Vikings head coach Bud Grant and Neill Armstrong, his defensive coordinator through most of the 1970s (now an assistant at Dallas), stacked it further during one season when they put 13 or 14 people in the huddle, committing to 11 only after the offense lined up. "Offenses closed that loophole in a hurry," says Ryan, another former Viking.

**A** lot of communication steps could be bypassed by letting quarterbacks call plays. Whether to do that is an age-old question that Brown thought he had answered before the 1962 season. Milt Plum had been lobbying to call plays in the huddle, so Brown traded him to Detroit and continued calling plays, this time for his new quarter-



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back, Frank Ryan, Ph.D.

Roger Staubach said he never felt like a complete quarterback at Dallas because Landry called the plays.

Otto Graham was similarly frustrated under Brown. Then Graham became a coach at the Coast Guard Academy.

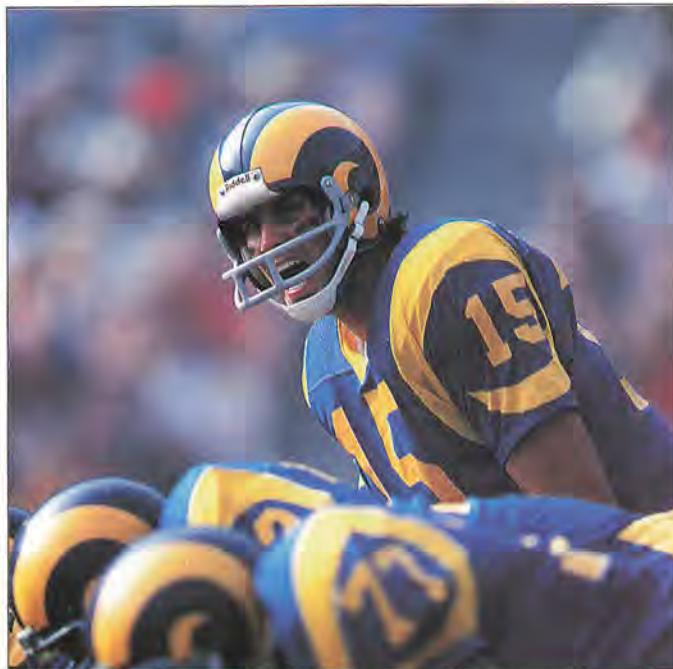
"I'll never forget one time I was talking with him," Brown says. "He let his quarterback call plays, and, near the end of one game, he called for a pass into the flat. The other team intercepted it for a ninety-nine-yard touchdown, and Otto told me, 'Now I know why you didn't let me call the plays."

A play-calling quarterback is rarer than ever now. Because of computers, more information is available than ever. Because of parity, pressure on coaches to win is greater than ever. Because of situation substitutions, defenses and offenses are more complicated than ever.

Calling plays is not as cerebral as it sounds. It involves picking one of a few plays from the appropriate list on the game plan. But as Gillman says, "Can you believe a quarterback competing with Landry? With Shula? Who do you think is going to win that kind of thing? The coaches spend more hours with film and printouts than quarterbacks possibly could spend.

"Then there's always the Bill Walsh theory. He says, 'I'm going to select thirty plays, and I'm going to call them at the beginning of the game right on down the line, except in special situations like short yardage. I know darn well these are the best plays I can possibly run. Let's not screw around. Let's use them.'"

Luckman, who called plays on the field when coaches had no alternative, says, "If I were playing now, I would hope a coach would let me call the plays. Not that I'm any smarter than he is. But I've got a better feel for the pulse of the game. I've got a good idea what the defense is doing and



**Rams quarterback Vince Ferragamo calls audible signals.**

how to take advantage of it."

It appears to be an idea whose time has passed. Brown takes satisfaction in that, having been fired at Cleveland the year after he traded Plum because his insistence on calling plays was supposed to be a sign that football had passed him by. "It pleases me," he says, "to see that what was supposed to be passé was really the thing of the future."

**L**ike so many football innovations, the audible was an advancement forced on offenses by improving defenses. In 1940, George Halas's Bears had no use for audibles. They were the only pro team using the T-formation, so defenses were not terribly original about how they attacked it. But Halas was an evangelist, teaching the T to coaches all over the country, and pretty soon he had to make a move to stay a step ahead of the others.

As Luckman recalls, "In order to counteract some defenses that were changing, we had to come up with different things at the line of scrimmage. With the team lined up, he would call 'Red,' meaning danger, and then a new play. Sometimes in the huddle, I'd

say, 'Ignore Red,' Luckman says. Thus was born the dummy audible, so defenses didn't necessarily know what was happening when they heard "Red."

By 1946, when Halas came out of the service, Luckman estimated 20 to 25 percent of the Bears' plays were called at the line. But he says those first few audibles, in about 1942, had one or two purposes: They either changed a run's direction to the defender's weakside, or they changed a pass from double coverage to single coverage.

Getting out of a badly timed play still is one of the two most common reasons for an audible. The other one, conversely, is to take advantage of a defense's weakness.

Less common types of audibles are in the two-minute drill, where a quarterback calls the play at the line of scrimmage without huddling, and what is called the "check-with-me" call in the huddle. In that case, a team is not sure enough of the defense's tendencies to call anything but a formation in the huddle, so the quarterback calls the play, or maybe the direction of a run, at the line of scrimmage.

In the more conventional audible situations, a quarterback sees something that

turns on a light bulb in his head, and he calls a playbook number. He calls it to both sides, so everyone can hear. Sometimes he calls a playbook number that doesn't mean a thing. His teammates know the audible isn't on unless they hear what is called a "hot" color, a verbal version of a third-base coach's indicator sign.

An audible is not the creative outlet it appears to be for a quarterback. He has been coached all week to look for specific circumstances in which to call one. In those circumstances, he only has a few plays at his disposal. "If anyone told you it was more than four or five, he'd be kidding you," Theismann says.

One common audible comes against a defense with two deep zones. If a quarterback has a fast tight end, he can take advantage of safeties shading toward the sidelines by sending his tight end deep down the middle, between the zones.

Another call comes when a cornerback is unusually deep. The quarterback beats him with a quick pass to the wide receiver, going either inside or outside.

If the cornerback is at the line of scrimmage, in position for bump-and-run coverage, Gillman says, "You've got to challenge him." Two plays do the trick. One is the fly, the go, the "nine" route, whatever means "sideline bomb" in the team's terminology. The other is a fade, in which the quarterback takes two steps back, throws the ball 20 yards downfield on the sideline and lets his receiver race the defender.

The fade also is a common big play that is audibled against an all-out blitz. It doesn't give the blitzers time to reach the quarterback.

"But teams chart you," Theismann says. "You can't pass on every blitz." You can also call a quick trap play up the middle. Theismann recalls getting 40 yards out of that audible five years ago.

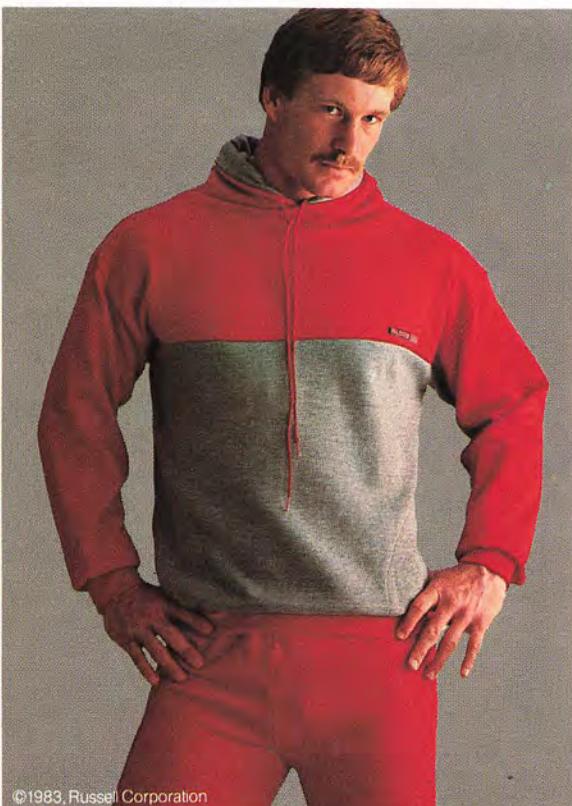
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The other common run audible is a quick toss outside. If an outside linebacker is not lined up in position to force the play in, it can go a long way.

"Half the big plays you see are from audibles," Brown says.

Some audibles, though, are inaudibles. They are called sight adjustments, and they are becoming more popular than audibles. "The trend," Theismann says, "is to have your quarterback read the run, after the snap."

"If you have a good system of reads," Gillman says, "you don't need many audibles. You've got a field fifty-three and a third yards wide. They can't cover that whole field. Someone has to be open. If you give your quarterback a simple system of keys to read, he'll know where the least amount of coverage is right after the snap."

The receiver has to read the same thing. That is why the keys can't be too complicated. Miami had a sight adjustment that was beautiful in its simplicity the year (1972) it went undefeated, 17-0. Halfback Jim Kiick could catch a five-yard pass any time he wanted by running to an area, cutting inside if the linebacker shaded him outside or cutting outside if the linebacker shaded him inside.

Any of the popular pass-play audibles also can be sight adjustments. That way, the play doesn't take any time to change; it can be changed after the ball is snapped, and it can be changed without letting the defense know.

"If you're getting into an audible, the defense is usually well aware of what you're doing," Theismann says. "The classic one is where everyone is up on the line to blitz. Dallas likes to do this. They listen to you call your audible, and then just before you snap the ball, they fall back into zone coverage. But now you've made a blitz adjustment, so you've got two guys running a pattern and six guys covering.

"The way to beat that is to dummy your audibles. That's where the actor in a quarterback comes out. You sound like you're audiblizing, but you're not. You really just hope you're convincing them."

Another problem with audibles is crowd noise, especially in a domed stadium. The 49ers abandoned the Shotgun in Super Bowl XVI because their center had trouble hearing the quarterback's signals in the Silverdome, and the center was only five yards away. A wide receiver is 15 to 20 yards away.

There is no more basic on-field communication than the snap count. The offensive players' advantage is to know it, to get that split-second head start. But in a noisy stadium, a wide receiver has to watch the ball, just like a defensive player.

**O**nce the offense lines up, it is linemen who do the most talking. The center speaks first, but guards and tackles have conversations, too.

They're not discussing who to block. That is part of the play. The question is which of several possible techniques to use. Linemen answer it with code words, maybe "vanilla" for a scoop block, "walleye" for a hook block, even something off-color if they want to break a defensive lineman's concentration.

Suppose the play from the huddle is a run to the right, calling for the center and the left guard to block the nose tackle and the right inside linebacker in a 3-4 defense. The basic blocking scheme might have the center blocking the nose man and the guard curling behind him to cut off the linebacker.

But maybe that didn't work the last time they tried it. Maybe the nose tackle overpowered the center. That's OK. It's still a good play. Only this time, the guard and center will double-team the nose tackle. They'll stay with

him until the linebacker starts to follow the ball carrier. Then the center slips away to cut him off.

**T**he defense has the noisier side of the line of scrimmage. Remember the defensive coordinator's sequence: He watches the offensive substitutions, sends in his own, and signals the front alignment, run responsibility, pass coverage, and perhaps a blitz.

Think of that as a primer coat. Before the wall is painted, the linebacker calling defensive signals may have to tell everyone which of half-dozen possible ways they'll play the called coverage. And he'll have to react to the offense's formation shifts and motion, because defenses are based on offensive tendencies, which are based on formations.

So the offense lines up. The signal-calling linebacker is calling "Blue Left! Blue Left!", which is the offense's formation. Soon the whole defense is hollering it like a mad Greek chorus.

"Then say they shift into a one-back set," says Buddy Curry, Atlanta's signal-calling linebacker. "We've decided we'll play that with a Cover One, which is man coverage. So I start yelling, 'Silver! Silver!' calling out the adjustment.

"Now the one back goes in motion. I go with him, so I make a Gone call, which tells the defensive end on my side he has to contain because I'm following the back."

Meanwhile, safeties are talking to cornerbacks and linebackers. Linebackers are talking to safeties and linemen. "Basically everybody's talking," says Tom Bass, San Diego's defensive coordinator. "But it isn't as chaotic as it sounds. Specific people are saying specific things to specific people."

They usually aren't telling anyone any news, either. The adjustments have been predetermined in the game plan.

They're mainly reinforcing each other, confirming that, yes, that is a single back in motion, and, that's right, we treat that with man-to-man coverage.

"I like a defense that talks a lot," Chicago wide receiver Brian Baschnagel says. "If they repeat their coverages enough, I might be able to pick them up. That way I know my own adjustments ahead of time."

The defense is willing to take that risk.

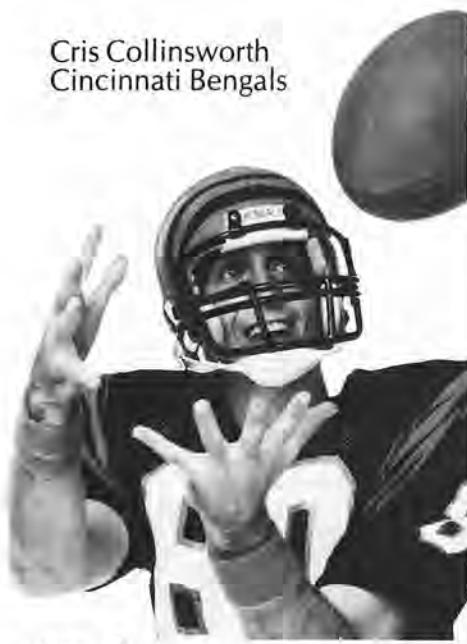
**W**hile all this chattering is going on between the sidelines, the coaches are busily talking about the next play. Half of them are upstairs in the coaches' box. On some teams, the coach calling offensive plays is there. On others, the upstairs coaches simply are monitoring the strategy. They're comparing the opponent's moves against what they expected, and they're sharing their better view of the field with the coaches and players on the sidelines.

They talk on open telephone lines. If one team's line fails to operate, the other team has to turn off its phones. This year, for the first time, each stadium has the same system. Basically, the defensive coaches have their line, the offensive coaches have theirs, and the head coach can tap into either one. The opponent cannot.

That wasn't always the case. Faulkner remembers when sideline-to-coaches' box communication was via walkie talkie in the mid-1950s. "I'd be talking to the bench, and some guy on the freeway with his radio on would be saying, 'Who the hell is this?'"

The early phone connections were barely more reliable. "I went up to Wrigley Field one Saturday to hook up our telephone system," Faulkner says. "I saw it plugged right in. I said, 'Fine,' and didn't give it another thought."

Cris Collinsworth  
Cincinnati Bengals



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### Q. How long can you wear them?

A. "I wear them playing ball, when I'm out on dates, just about everywhere. And every waking minute. I don't like hiding my face behind glasses."

### Q. Aren't they uncomfortable?

A. "They're so easy to wear, I can't tell I've got them on. Bausch & Lomb has a special process that fine tapers them and makes them incredibly thin. Even eye care professionals rank them number one for comfort."

### Q. How often do you clean them?

A. "Once a day. They're no more bother than brushing my teeth."

### Q. Aren't they expensive?

A. "They'd be worth it if they cost twice as much. But the truth is you'll be surprised at how inexpensive they are. Lots less than some designer glasses."

### Q. I've heard about new lenses, have you?

A. "Yes. Bausch & Lomb now makes soft contacts for people with astigmatism and for people who need bifocals. And if you're nearsighted, they've just introduced the 30 DAY LENS. You can wear them up to 30 days without removing."

### Q. How do I find out if soft contacts are right for me?

A. "See your eye care professional. Most offer trial fittings. And ask for Bausch & Lomb contacts... the most prescribed soft contacts in the world."

"It wasn't until Sunday that I found out it went through the stadium switchboard. Bob Waterfield was our quarterback coach up in the press box, and every time he called something, they jumped right on it. So after the game, we accused Halas of bugging our phone. Some reporters asked him about it. 'Is that right?' He kept saying, 'Yup.' Everything they asked, Halas just said 'Yup. So what?'"

Another of Faulkner's old communication devices was called a telewriter. "Hotels use it," he says. "You could draw something on a sheet of paper, and it came out down on the field. You could diagram a play for them. I don't know why I don't see anyone using that today."

Faulkner remembers using videotape, and playing it back at halftime so the players could see why certain things hadn't worked. Much clearer than a blackboard. But the NFL outlawed all electronic devices in the press box area for coaches.

Now the players settle for Polaroid photographs. A coach takes two shots of each play, one for the linemen and a later one for the secondary. Both offensive and defensive linemen find them helpful, using them to locate problems they hadn't been able to see from their three-point stances.

But, mainly, an upstairs coach does one of two things on each play. He says, "Yes, they're doing what we anticipated. That play's still good, even if it didn't work. The right guard just got beat physically." Or he says, "Forget that play. They're overshifting to the right. We didn't expect that."

**T**he upstairs coaches make a detailed presentation at halftime. They compare the day's reality with the week's expectations. There usually isn't much difference. The losing team simply is failing to do the single thing coaches communicate the most. It isn't executing.

"Halftime is not a time for screaming and haranguing," Paul Brown says. "It is a time to keep everybody calm. To reassure the players that the game plan is fine and they'll win if they just execute... if they just block and tackle."

"You're not going to change your game plan at halftime," Brown says. "You might change what you call a little bit." You might decide, "Hey, this is working better than that. Let's keep using this and throw that out." Or you might decide you're going to have to run this particular play three or four

times in the third quarter to set up that long pass in the fourth quarter, or some other minor adjustment to improve your chances.

You also better keep in mind that the other team isn't just watching the TV game in the other locker room. "That's the beauty of the one-back offense," Gillman says. "You can package it in different sets. So your offense is simple. You're not talking about a hundred plays. You're talking about nine or ten running plays and nine or ten passing plays. At halftime, you don't change the plays. You just change the sets."

"So over in the other dressing room, while their coach is saying, 'When they line up this way, we do this,' you're saying, 'Package two.' You're not going to line up this way anymore."

If an overhaul is in order, it can't wait until halftime. "If people are kicking your brains out," Buddy Ryan says, "you can't wait until you can see the film. You've only got 16 chances." That is why Bass says it is so important for the offense to make a first down after the opponent makes a long drive. It gives the defense time to address its problem.

John Mackovic made his most significant halftime adjustment as Wake Forest's head coach after he had left the dressing room. He already had perused the formation and tendency sheets from the upstairs coaches, and now he was just looking at the ordinary statistics sheet. It showed him Wake Forest was 8 for 19 on passes.

He thought about how the game plan had called for deep passes when Maryland blitzed. On his way to the bench, he told his quarterback to throw short against the blitz. It worked. Wake Forest had almost 300 yards passing in the second half and won the game.

"There are coaches and there are coaches," Gillman says. "The best coaches are game-day coaches. Look at Landry. The wheels are going around, the brain is constantly working. Shula, too. You can tell it, looking at them. No screaming or ranting. They don't have time for butt chewing. They're concentrating, thinking ahead, adjusting."

The best coaches are human switchboards, making sure the right information gets to the right people. Of course, it helps if the coach's right people also are the best players. As Faulkner says, "If I've got better players than you, I can go in at halftime, have a Coca-Cola and smoke a cigarette, and say, 'How long 'til we go back out?'"

Some things speak for themselves. Talent usually has the last word.



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# CRAZY ABOUT THE COWBOYS

*America's Fanatics Love America's Team*

*By Carlton Stowers*

**I**t was early on a Sunday morning. The manager of the Meadowlands Hilton already had dismissed the possibility that he might find time for a cup of coffee and a quick glance at the *New York Times* sports section. Outside the window of his office, which faces the lobby, a sea of people mingled, lending a convention air to the place.

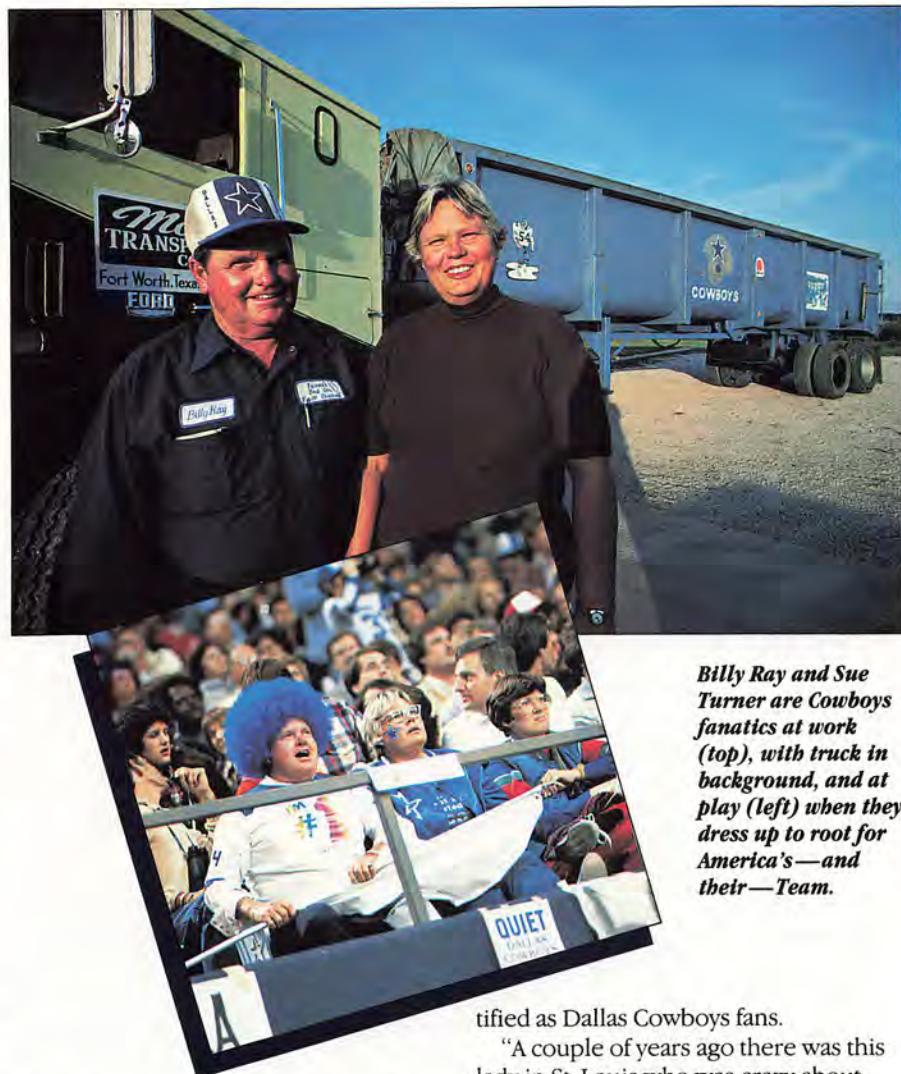
The corridors near the elevators were so jammed that getting on and off was all but impossible. "We'll have to clear everyone out," the manager finally said, summoning security officials. It then was announced that everyone who did not hold a room key would have to wait outside the lobby.

What they would wait for was a sight of the Dallas Cowboys, the team that was headquartered there prior to their game with the New York Giants.

Among those in the lobby who had a key were Billy Ray and Sue Turner of Fort Worth, Texas, dedicated Cowboys fans who rarely miss a game, home or away. They also have traveled to Thousand Oaks, California, where they have watched their favorite team labor through two-a-day training camp drills at Cal Lutheran College. In addition to being fans of the pluperfect order, the Turners labor long and hard as self-appointed goodwill ambassadors for the Cowboys.

The Turners are in the recycling business, hauling material around Fort Worth in a 35-foot Cherokee hydraulic dump trailer with the Cowboys' logo emblazoned on its sides and back door. But on autumn Saturdays, they park the dump truck and fly wherever the Cowboys are playing. Through careful pre-season planning, they always manage to stay in the hotel where the Cowboys will be lodged. And by mingling with the local fans there to catch a glimpse of head coach Tom Landry or get Tony Dorsett's autograph or shake Danny White's hand, they have, for years, enjoyed a ring-side vantage point for their beloved Cowboys.

"You wouldn't believe how many people are able to find out where the team is staying and come over to just let the



*Billy Ray and Sue Turner are Cowboys fanatics at work (top), with truck in background, and at play (left) when they dress up to root for America's—and their—Team.*

players know they're big fans," Sue Turner says. "You see it everywhere we go." To help make the long-distance fans feel a part of all the pregame hoopla that follows the Cowboys, Billy Ray and Sue often host a hospitality suite, inviting all Cowboys fans in for a few beers, snacks, Cowboys bumper stickers, and the latest news on their Blue and Silver heroes.

Once they became aware of the enthusiasm of the people in other cities, Sue and Billy Ray began packing a suitcase filled with team pictures and decals. "I buy them in lots of 500," Sue says. "And I rarely get home with any left over. People are tickled to death to get something that enables them to be iden-

tified as Dallas Cowboys fans.

"A couple of years ago there was this lady in St. Louis who was crazy about this big button Billy Ray was wearing. She first offered him five dollars for it, then ten. He finally explained to her that he wouldn't feel right selling it to her and took it off and pinned it on her coat. She was speechless."

Billy Ray is quick to point out that such autumn travels hardly are considered extravagant in the Turner household. "My wife and I aren't wealthy people by any stretch of the imagination," he says. "But we don't drink, we don't go out much, and we don't take a vacation every summer. We save our money to follow the Cowboys. It's something we've enjoyed doing for a long time."

# SUPER BOWL.

What's the best play you can make during an NFL game? That's easy. Reach for the Fisher Nuts. Because Fisher takes the nut very seriously.

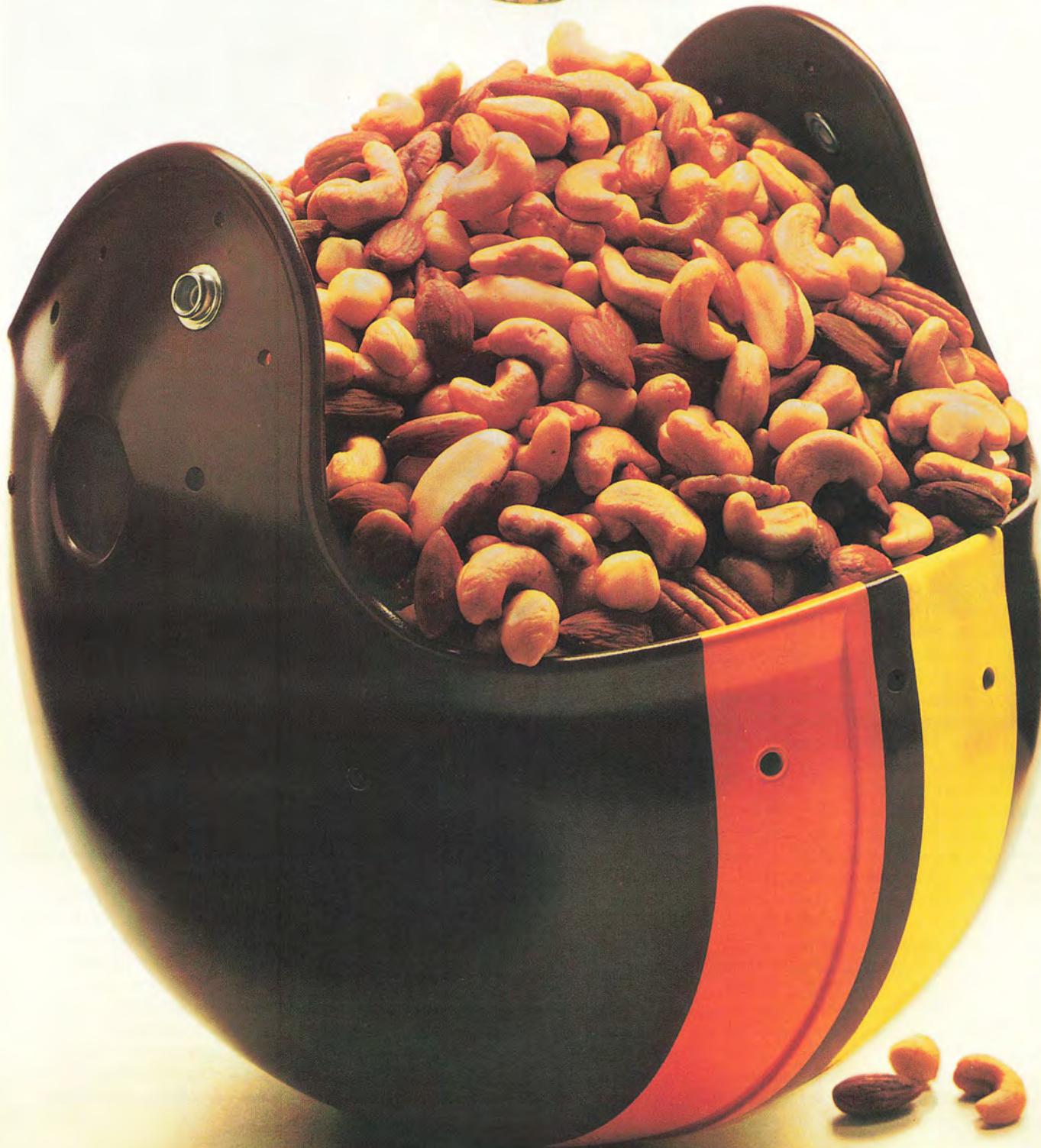
Fisher proudly offers you a full line of great tasting snacking nuts, including, of course, ever-popular peanuts, cashews, and a variety of mixes.



We select each nut with great care. They're roasted separately with skill and patience. You can taste the difference in every bite. Every bowl is a super bowl when it's filled with Fisher Nuts.

We take the nut very seriously.

**FISHER**



Recently, he admits, he did fudge on the budget a bit. Time had come, he told his wife, to get a new paint job on the truck that he drives between Dallas and Houston. What he did not tell her was that the facelift would include a custom painting of Tony Dorsett on one side, Randy White on the other, and a replica of the famed Cowboys Cheerleaders logo on the trailer.

"It's been worth every cent it costs," he says. "Man, when I'm driving around in Houston I get all kinds of static from Oilers fans. But, I get a lot of friendly waves and honks from people who are obviously Cowboys fans, too."

In Yonkers, New York, 31-year-old Mike Mooney, a business manager for Macy's advertising department, always answers his phone the same way: "Hello, this is Randy White."

He is not an impostor. It is simply the way he has chosen to let any and everyone who might call know that he is (a) the "world's biggest Dallas Cowboys fan," and (b) a personal, first-name-basis friend of the Cowboys' all-pro defensive tackle. His wife Joyce does not see her husband's behavior as odd. In fact, she was the one who suggested last Christmas that they send out personalized Christmas cards featuring a photo of Mike and her flanking Randy.

"I take being a Cowboys fan pretty seriously," he says. "I've been following them since I was ten years old. See, back then my younger brother and I used to play a lot of football out in the front yard. We always had to call ourselves some team name and I had chosen to be the Los Angeles Rams. He wanted to know who he should be, so I suggested that he be the Dallas Cowboys."

"To encourage him, I started clipping things out of the paper about the team for him to read. The more I did, the more interested I got in the team. Then, when they played the Green Bay Packers for the NFL championship that first time [after the 1966 season] this kid across the street was really pulling for the Packers. I decided I'd root for Dallas. I've been doing it ever since."

He's done it with an enthusiasm that has grown annually. Shortly after meeting Randy White in a New York airport when White was a rookie, Mooney became a fan of the All-America from Maryland.

"We've become good friends over the years," he says. "He's helped me get tickets to games here in New York and has introduced me to some of the other players and people in the front office.



*Mike and Joyce Mooney flank their hero, Randy White, in a Christmas card pose.*

Randy White is, without a doubt, the greatest person I've ever known. And, of course, everyone knows he's the greatest defensive lineman in the game today."

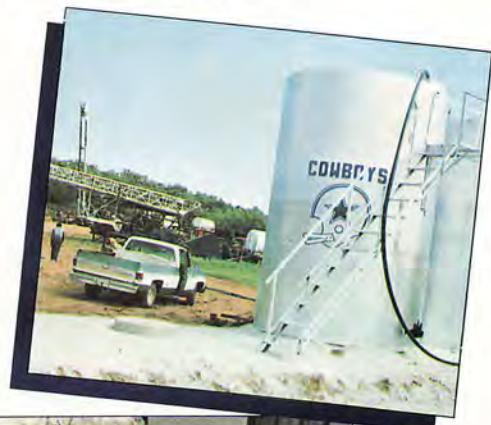
Mooney, in fact, insists he has the most complete scrapbook ever compiled on his hero. "I've got magazine articles and covers that he says he's never even seen. One of these days I'll probably give them to him."

Needless to say, Mooney's enthusiasm for the Cowboys has caused him no small amount of grief from neighboring Giants and Jets fans. "When the Giants beat Dallas," he admits, "I don't answer the phone for a week, sometimes two. On the other hand, when Dallas beats

*Oilman John Johns has the Cowboys' helmet and logo painted on the side of his oil storage tanks (right); stock car race driver Scott Horner's "Dallas Cowboys' Special," old number 72 (below).*

the Giants I still get a lot of heckling. A couple of years ago, some Giants fan egged my house. Another time somebody came by and threw firecrackers in the front yard. Burned up most of my grass. But, hey, that's all part of it."

Mike's brother Jim, who now lives in Minneapolis, fights much the same battle with Minnesota Vikings fans.



# Gillette SUPER BOWL SWEEPSTAKES



# WIN \$50,000



**Pick the winner of  
Super Bowl XVIII...  
for your chance to  
Win \$50,000.**

Go to your participating store. Get a Gillette Super Bowl Sweepstakes certificate for details and enter right away! No purchase required. (Sweepstakes entries must be postmarked by midnight **January 21, 1984**. Void where prohibited.)

**FREE!** SUPER BOWL XVIII  
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Bonus lighter offer valid only with purchase of at least 2 participating brands.

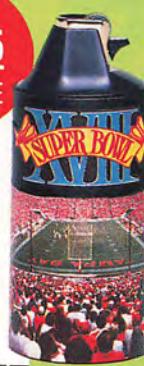
Cut out and mail in this free lighter certificate together with your completed refund offer certificate and proofs of purchase. Certificates are available only at Gillette Super Bowl Sweepstakes displays at your favorite store. Note! Lighter offer is only valid when accompanied by refund certificate.

Free Lighter Offer expires **February 29, 1984**. Allow 6-8 weeks for delivery.

Offer good only in U.S.A. Limit one lighter per household. This coupon may not be mechanically reproduced and must accompany your request. Void where prohibited by law.

**SAVE UP \$3  
TO**

We'll send you up to \$3.00 cash for buying participating Gillette brands. Refund certificates are available at your participating store.



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Cut out the free lighter certificate on the left and include it with your official refund certificate. We'll send you a handsome Super Bowl XVIII commemorative table lighter with your refund. Gillette's Super Bowl refund certificates are available only on Gillette displays at your favorite store! (Refund/Bonus lighter offer expires **February 29, 1984**.)

**L**eaving town is something San Francisco school teacher Irene Carnazola does regularly during the football season. A Notre Dame alumna and an avowed Cowboys fan, she has, since the mid-1970s, arranged her weekend schedule to be in the stands on Saturdays to cheer the Fighting Irish, then hops a plane to make it to the site of the Cowboys' game.

"A few years ago," she says, "the San Francisco paper did a story on the fact I travel to all the games, and the school board had a fit. That particular year I was on leave, traveling around the country on a program that many teachers take advantage of. When the story came out that I made it to every Notre Dame and Cowboys game, several parents apparently got really upset. They went to the school board and the school board, in turn, took the matter to the superintendent of schools. Basically, they were saying here's a teacher who is supposed to be traveling around the United States, going to museums and visiting historical sites to broaden her knowledge of the country for her students, but all she's doing is going to football games."

"I pointed out to those directly critical of me that I used only my weekends to go to the games. Everyone should be able to do what she wants with her weekends, right?"

She goes on to point out that she usually bypasses Monday night games for the simple reason it would force her to take time off from her teaching work. "And, hey, there have been some Monday night games I would really have liked to see," she says.

Over the years she has become such a familiar face that Cowboys officials regularly offer her a ride on one of the team's charter buses going to the airport following an out-of-town game so she can make her usually tight flight schedule and get back home in time to prepare for her Monday morning classes.

"When people ask what prompted me to begin following the Cowboys," she says, "I really don't have a very good answer. I didn't have any family connections in Dallas; no friends on the team or anything. I just admired the way they played, the things I had heard and read about the organization, the class they seemed to always show. I wanted to see first-hand what the Cowboys were all about so I went to a few of their games. It didn't take long for me to get hooked. I guess I'll be following them from now on."



*Bobby Orta poses in Cowboys-inspired bedroom of sons Robert and Benjamin.*

**T**ony Wargo always was there when the Cowboys played. Home or away, he always was on hand, waiting outside the locker room to offer his congratulations. For those who had played exceptionally well there was a special handshake, one that included the discreet passage of a silver dollar.

That was his trademark. Tony Wargo silver dollars, they were called, and they became trophies, not payoffs, to those who received them.

Tony Dorsett still has his; so do Drew Pearson and Billy Joe DuPree. They've kept them because Wargo, a resident of Coaldale, Pennsylvania, was a special person. More than a fan, he was a friend.

He had, in effect, followed former Dallas quarterback Roger Staubach from the Naval Academy to the Cowboys, never missing a game. He was in San Francisco in October, 1981, visiting friends before traveling on to Los Angeles to watch the Cowboys play when he died in his sleep at age 62.

When funeral services were later held in Coaldale, among those who had traveled to pay their last respects were Irene Carnazola and the Turners from Fort Worth. Such a bond had developed among these Cowboys followers over the years.

"Tony was a unique individual," Staubach says. "He was a giver, a man who delighted in doing something for others. But if you tried to do something for him it would embarrass him."

"He would come around the room on Saturday night," retired center John Fitzgerald recalls, "and tell everyone how their college team had done that day and just sit and chat a few minutes. He was a delightful man, a friend to everyone."

When the Cowboys arrived in San Francisco for a game several years ago and failed to see Tony, some of the players began checking around and found he was in a local hospital.

"He was a diabetic and had circulatory problems," Staubach says, "and had become ill after arriving in San Francisco. Everyone on the team was concerned about him."

Staubach and Pearson paid him a visit in the hospital on Sunday morning before reporting for the regularly scheduled pregame meeting.

"He was a Catholic," Staubach says, "and always attended our team Mass. He would hand out the prayer books and keep an eye out for the priest. Everyone who knew him, loved him. He was something more than a fan."

**N**ot all Cowboys fans express their enthusiasm in the reserved manner that was characteristic of Wargo. Many, in fact, are walking, talking signboards.

Marian Dillon, who works for Texas Instruments in Dallas, traditionally paints her fingernails blue and silver as soon as the Cowboys report to training camp to prepare for the new season.

In Odessa, Texas, O.E. Cumbie, another of those who travels to wherever the Cowboys might be playing, hands out business cards with the following message printed on them: "Peace on Earth and Goodwill Toward All Cowboys Fans. O.E. Cumbie, Cowboys' No. 1 Fan."

In Albuquerque, New Mexico, stock car race driver Scott Horner drives a blue and silver "Dallas Cowboys

Special," with Ed (Too Tall) Jones's number 72 painted on the door.

When Dallas independent oilman John Johns's first well came in out in West Texas a year ago, the silver storage tank that was erected near the drilling site featured a Cowboys helmet painted on the side.

In even less friendly country, a Pittsburgh truck driver who delivers bundles of Pittsburgh newspapers to street-corner vendors ignores the wrath of Steelers fans who give him a hard time about the Cowboys insignia painted on the side of his truck.

"The following we've had over the years has been incredible," says Cowboys president and general manager Tex Schramm. "There isn't an NFL city anywhere we go that we don't have a large following. We have a lot of people from Dallas who travel to the out-of-town games, and then there are a lot of people in the cities where we play who are enthusiastic Cowboys fans. I've always been one of those who felt there was something to the home-field advantage, simply because of the excitement local fans generate. Some of that is negated when we're on the road because invariably there will be a pretty good representation of Cowboys fans in any stadium in which we play—even New York and Washington and Philadelphia. And, naturally, they yell and demonstrate that much harder just to let our players know they're there."

It was, in fact, the kind of enthusiasm that resulted in the name—"America's Team"—the Cowboys carry. It was bestowed on them when, after viewing footage for the annual team highlights film, NFL Films producers noticed that shots of the people in the stands where

Dallas played were filled with wildly demonstrating Cowboys fans.

And although it is a title others in the league are quick to criticize, it is a difficult one to argue against. The bulk of the readership of the 103,000 circulation, club-published *Dallas Cowboys Weekly* is from outside the immediate Dallas area. In fact, the award-winning tabloid has subscribers in every state as well as a dozen foreign countries. In Mexico, a Spanish-language edition reaches 300,000 additional readers. "We get more mail from Mexico than anywhere," editor Steve Perkins says.

Cowboys memorabilia also far outdistances that of any other NFL team. The Cowboys dominate retail sales of merchandise licensed by the NFL, accounting for 25 percent of the total sales.

**L**ong-distance fans are eager to make Cowboys officials aware of their unique methods of support. There's a fan in Florida, for instance, who damns the expense when, on rare occasion, he's unable to get the Cowboys games on television. In such instances he solves the problem simply by calling a friend in Dallas, who places the phone by a radio carrying the play-by-play.

And recently the efforts of a West Orange, Texas, painter-stenciler came to the attention of the team's public relations department. Bobby Orta undertook a project of painting his young son's room to resemble the interior of Texas Stadium, home of the Cowboys.

"I had painted the kids' toy box in Cowboys colors," Orta explains, "and had to buy a gallon of blue and silver paint to do it. With so much paint left over, I decided I might as well go ahead and do the entire room."

What resulted was a room complete with scoreboard statistics, seats, and goal posts. Even the closet doors were painted to resemble locker room doors with the names and ages of the two resident "players"—Robert Orta, 2½, and Benjamin Orta, 7 months—lettered neatly across the top.

With his wife offering suggestions as the project continued, Orta included the 30-second clocks in the design, then decided the stadium Ring of Honor, which lists former stars and the years they played with the Cowboys, should be included.

As a finishing touch, Orta painted the ceiling of the room to resemble the roof of Texas Stadium. "I wanted it to be as authentic as I could make it," he says. "We don't get a chance to get to Dallas for the games, so I had to work from photographs and what I picked up from watching the games on television."

How many kids do you know who get to sleep in Texas Stadium every night? he asks.

Edward Tomlin is a kid who sleeps in more of a museum than a stadium replica. He's a 16-year-old living in Dallas, with the good fortune of having an interior designer as his father. Gerald Tomlin has won several awards from the American Society of Interior Designers.

Edward was looking for a way to display his vast collection of Cowboys (and other Texas sports teams) memorabilia. His father obliged by redecorating the entire room in a silver and blue high-tech motif, complete with chrome-plated lighting and streamlined furniture, not to mention customized display shelves for the various mementos.

Teenager Greg Stanfield, a recent high school graduate and die-hard Cowboys fan in Dallas, can go the Ortas and Tomlins one better.

When his parents, Jim and Bobbie Stanfield, suggested they would foot the bill for him, his date, and another couple to have dinner anywhere he chose on the evening of the senior prom, Greg pondered the possibilities and then said he could think of no place more enjoyable than the 50-yard line of Texas Stadium.

His parents, taken aback but true to their word, contacted Texas Stadium manager Bert Rose to make arrangements, then hired a catering service to provide the table, linens, service, and a four-course meal.

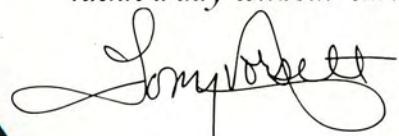
It all just goes to show—if you'll pardon the time-worn cliché—that there are those out there who do eat and sleep the Dallas Cowboys.



Dining at Texas Stadium is teenager Greg Stanfield (left) and prom guests.



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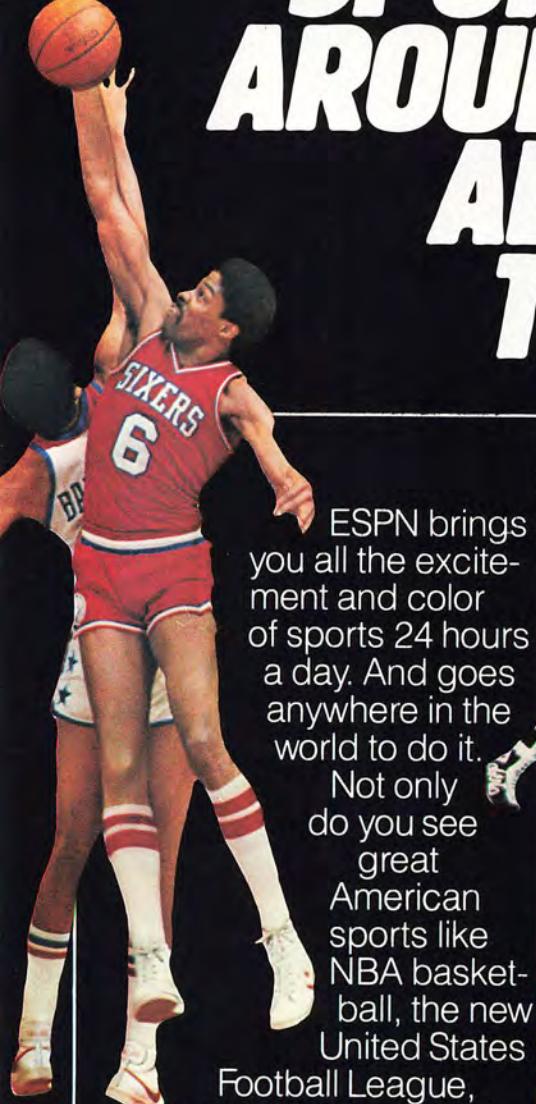


*Tony Dorsett*  
All-Pro running back

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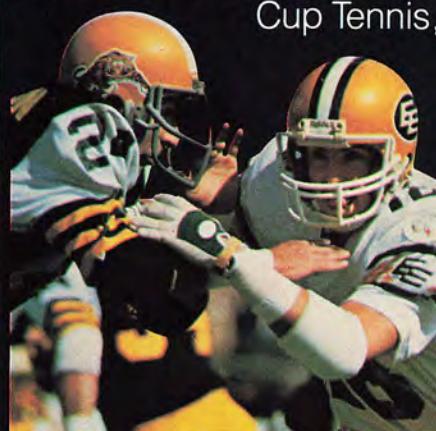
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## THE 24 HOUR CABLE SPORTS NETWORK

# PRO!

## Readers' Questionnaire

As *PRO!* goes into the home stretch of its third season as a national subscription and newsstand magazine (this is the fifth of seven 1983-84 issues), the editors would like to know a little about what you like and don't like in *PRO!*. Please complete the questionnaire, and mail it (along with any other comments or suggestions you might have) to: *PRO!* Questionnaire, 10880 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 2302, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

1. How do you feel about the major features or departments in this issue of *PRO!*?

	Read, Liked	Read, Didn't Like	Haven't Read	No Interest
<b>Major Features</b>				
George Halas (page 22)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ted Hendricks (page 28)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Veteran QB photos (page 36)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Packers Receivers (page 49)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication in NFL (page 62)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cowboys Fans (page 77)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Departments**

Contents (page 3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PRO! Data (page 4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Observations (page 9)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
On the Sidelines (page 13)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People (page 15)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Rating Game (page 19)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Madden on Football (page 89)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
etc! (beginning on page 89)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Craftsmen (page 93)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 Years Ago (page 97)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It Figures (page 99)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
End Zone (page 104)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The following departments are not in this issue, but have been in recent issues:

Press Box	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Success Story	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nostalgia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vital Statistics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments and suggestions \_\_\_\_\_

2. What would you like to see more or less of in *PRO!* in future issues? And on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being highest), how would you rate *PRO!*'s coverage of these categories (please enter number in box at far right):

	More	Less	About the Same	How Do You Rate <i>PRO!</i>
Personality features (Such as Hendricks, Packers Receivers)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photographic features (Such as Veteran Quarterbacks)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historical features (Such as George Halas, 10 Years Ago)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategy/Insight stories (Such as Communication, John Madden, Craftsmen)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offbeat features (Such as Cowboys Fans)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Statistical (Such as It Figures)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Humor (Such as Observations, etc!)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. We'd like to get some idea of how you found out about *PRO!*, and how you rate it among other sports publications you receive or have read:

a) This is *PRO!*'s third year as a national subscription and newsstand magazine. When did you first begin buying *PRO!*? 1981  1982  1983

b) Where did you learn about *PRO!*? Direct Mail  Newsstand  Saw a friend's issue  Television  Other \_\_\_\_\_

c) How do you obtain *PRO!*? Through subscription  Through newsstand  From a friend

d) Do you regularly attend NFL games?

Yes  No  Sometimes

e) If you attend NFL games, do you purchase *GameDay*, the stadium magazine-game program?

Yes  No  Sometimes

f) Do you regularly watch NFL games on television?

Yes  No  Sometimes

### ***Questionnaire Continued***

g) Check the team you follow most closely:

**AFC**

- Baltimore Colts**
- Buffalo Bills**
- Cincinnati Bengals**
- Cleveland Browns**
- Denver Broncos**
- Houston Oilers**
- Kansas City Chiefs**
- Los Angeles Raiders**
- Miami Dolphins**
- New England Patriots**
- New York Jets**
- Pittsburgh Steelers**
- San Diego Chargers**
- Seattle Seahawks**

**NFC**

- Atlanta Falcons
- Chicago Bears
- Dallas Cowboys
- Detroit Lions
- Green Bay Packers
- Los Angeles Rams
- Minnesota Vikings
- New Orleans Saints
- New York Giants
- Philadelphia Eagles
- St. Louis Cardinals
- San Francisco 49ers
- Tampa Bay Buccaneers
- Washington Redskins

**h) Check the other NFL teams you follow:**

**AFC**

- Baltimore Colts**
- Buffalo Bills**
- Cincinnati Bengals**
- Cleveland Browns**
- Denver Broncos**
- Houston Oilers**
- Kansas City Chiefs**
- Los Angeles Raiders**
- Miami Dolphins**
- New England Patriots**
- New York Jets**
- Pittsburgh Steelers**
- San Diego Chargers**
- Seattle Seahawks**

**NFC**

- Atlanta Falcons
- Chicago Bears
- Dallas Cowboys
- Detroit Lions
- Green Bay Packers
- Los Angeles Rams
- Minnesota Vikings
- New Orleans Saints
- New York Giants
- Philadelphia Eagles
- St. Louis Cardinals
- San Francisco 49ers
- Tampa Bay Buccaneers
- Washington Redskins

i) In general, how do you rate *PRO!* among sports publications? Better  As good  Not as good

j) Rate the following sports publications on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being highest) in the box on the left below

k) Which other publications do you subscribe to, or purchase: *Time*  *Newsweek*  *U.S. News and World Report*  *People*  *Playboy*  *Esquire*  *Forbes*  *Business Weekly*  *Reader's Digest*  *TV Guide*   
Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Any NFL team publication (if so, which one) \_\_\_\_\_**

1) How much time do you spend reading an issue of *PRO!*?  
less than one hour  1-2 hours  more than 2 hours

m) How many other people read your issue of *PRO!*?

1  2  3  more than 3

o) What do you like least about PRO!?

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**4. We'd like to know a little bit about you:**

a) Age: 19 or under  20-29  30-39  40-49   
50-59  60 or older

b) Sex: M  F

c) Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_  
d) Education: High school graduate  Attended college  College graduate  Graduate school

e) Family Income: Under \$15,000   
\$15,001-25,000  \$25,001-40,000   
\$40,001-55,000  \$55,001-75,000

**\$75,001 or more**

**Any other comments about *PRO!*?**

*PRO!*  
*Sports Illustrated*  
*Sport*  
*Inside Sports*  
*Pro Football Weekly*  
*Sporting News*

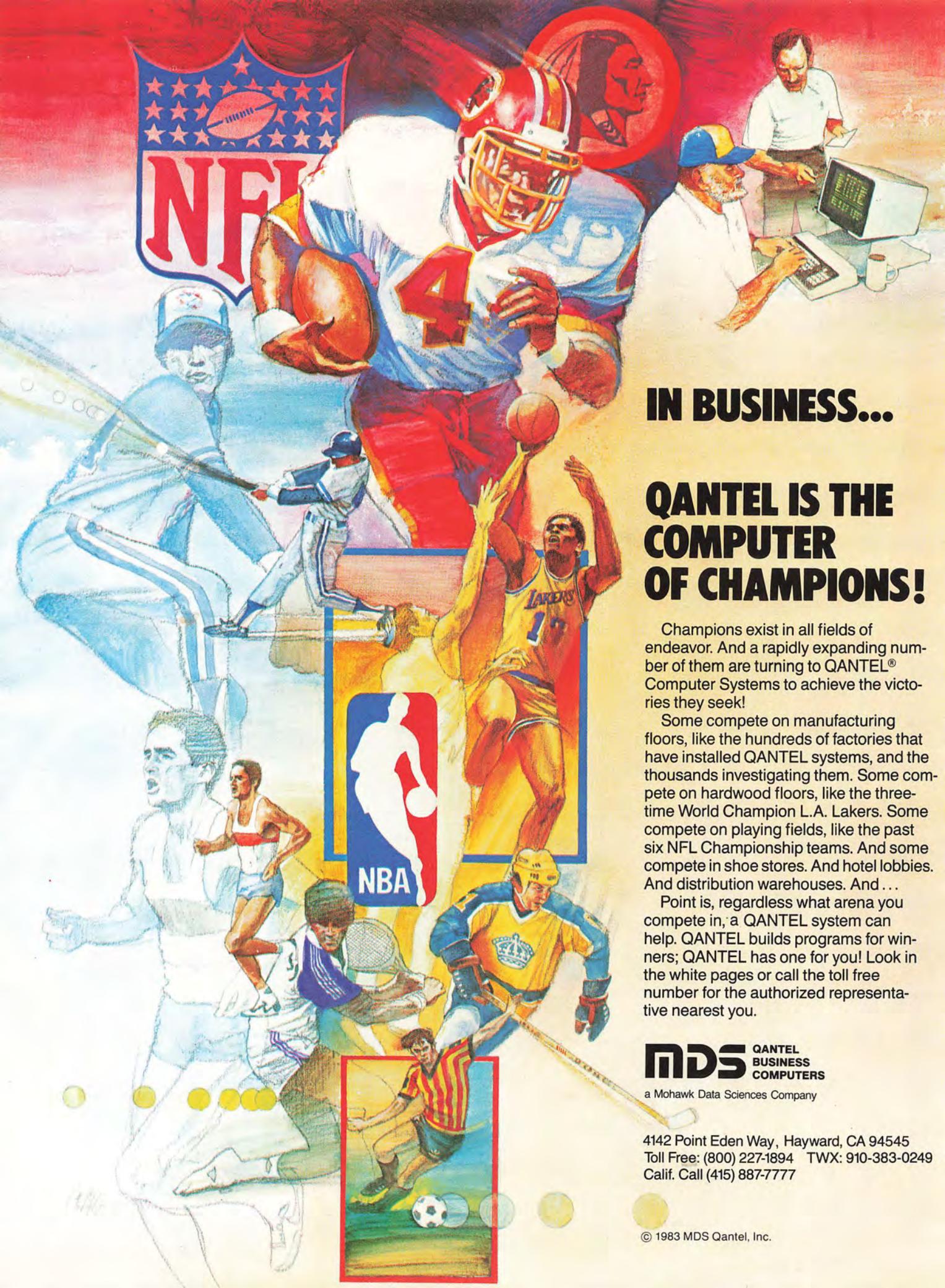
Please return this questionnaire in a stamped envelope. Mail to: PRO! Questionnaire, 10880 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 2302, Los Angeles, CA 90024. If you would like a

copy of the results of this questionnaire, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your copy of the questionnaire. PPG

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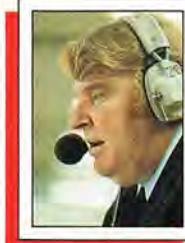
# AUDIBLES

*Madden on Football*

## Whither Consistency?

*The Answer Is Complicated*

*By John Madden, with Steve Cassady*



IT'S IRONIC. YOU look at the NFL this season, and just about every team talks about the same problem— inconsistency. One reader, Scott Clabourne of Tucson, Arizona, asks about it: "How come we're seeing so many up-and-down teams, so many teams that fall apart one week and look like world beaters the next?"

You sure can't fault the relevance of the question. The week the Dallas Cowboys were 7-0, I remember talking with Tom Landry, and he said his team was playing inconsistent football. I was thinking, "This guy's undefeated, and we're talking about what's wrong with his team." If it's a problem for Tom Landry, what must it be for the losers?

Apparently a big deal, because at the same time, Tampa Bay was 0-7, and John McKay was talking about his team's lack of consistency.

But the team taking the prize for inconsistency during that same stretch was the Green Bay Packers. One week the Packers looked terrible, losing to the New York Giants. The next week they trampled Tampa Bay 55-14. One week later they lost to Detroit. Next, they got in a shootout with the Redskins on Monday night and pulled off a 48-47 victory.

You could look down the list, at how many teams are following this same up-and-down pattern, and you could see it's a lot of them. The Los Angeles Raiders, for instance. At one point earlier in the year, they were rolling along, threatening to run away with the AFC West. All of a sud-

den, they had a game in which they had eight turnovers, losing to Seattle on a day when the Seahawks totaled two net yards passing. That's inconsistency.

Now, getting back to Tom Landry and

If you have any questions about pro football, send them to: John Madden, *PRO!* Magazine, 10880 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 2302, Los Angeles, CA 90024

the Cowboys. He had an explanation for this widespread problem.

He said that NFL offenses used to be relatively simple. Everyone had two

wide receivers, a tight end, two running backs. You predicated your defense on that standard offense. By the same token, your offense was always facing a standard 4-3 or 3-4 defense.

Given those standard offenses and defenses, the way you got consistent was by drills and repetition. You remember seeing film clips of Vince Lombardi diagramming the Green Bay Packer Sweep and talking about drilling his team until they could run it to perfection.

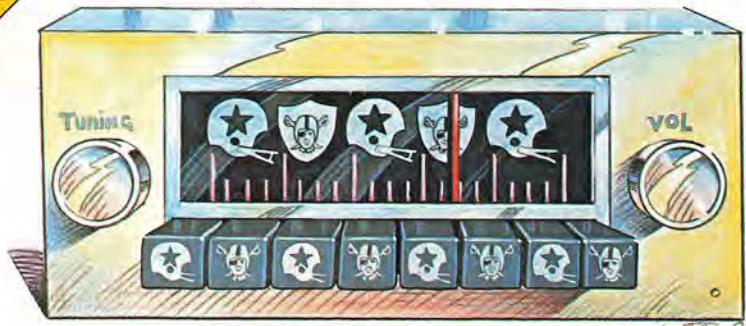
You could do it in those days because every team the Packers faced played a 4-3 defense, and you knew where everyone was. It was a more personal matchup then. You'd drill on techniques until you had them down, and then you'd let the matchups decide who won.

But these days, that kind of repetition and drilling is nearly impossible. There isn't enough time. Take one simple running play, like the sweep.

Every team that plays a three-man line also goes to a four-man line, and vice-versa. So you have to practice your sweep against both. Then you have to prac-

etc!

### From Right to Left Across Your Dial



There is no way of documenting, with any degree of accuracy, the number of listeners to, or viewers of, any given NFL broadcast or telecast. Ratings, based on an audience sampling, can give percentages and "market share" figures, but counting is impossible.

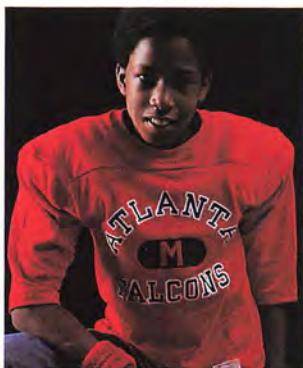
It would be difficult, though, to imagine a wider audience for any regular-season NFL game than the one that tuned in Dallas's Sunday night game with the Los Angeles Raiders in week eight: English-speaking radio networks for both teams, Spanish-speaking networks for both teams (Dallas's includes 15 stations), CBS radio network, and ABC television's Sunday night coverage.

Now, before some enterprising soul sets out to measure the (approximate) audience, keep in mind a random statistic. The Raiders' radio network alone takes in four 50,000-watt stations, one each in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, and Las Vegas—meaning, of course, that the reach of those stations carried well beyond the city limits (and even farther, Dallas vs. Los Angeles being a night game). Okay, now start counting. . . .

—TED BROCK

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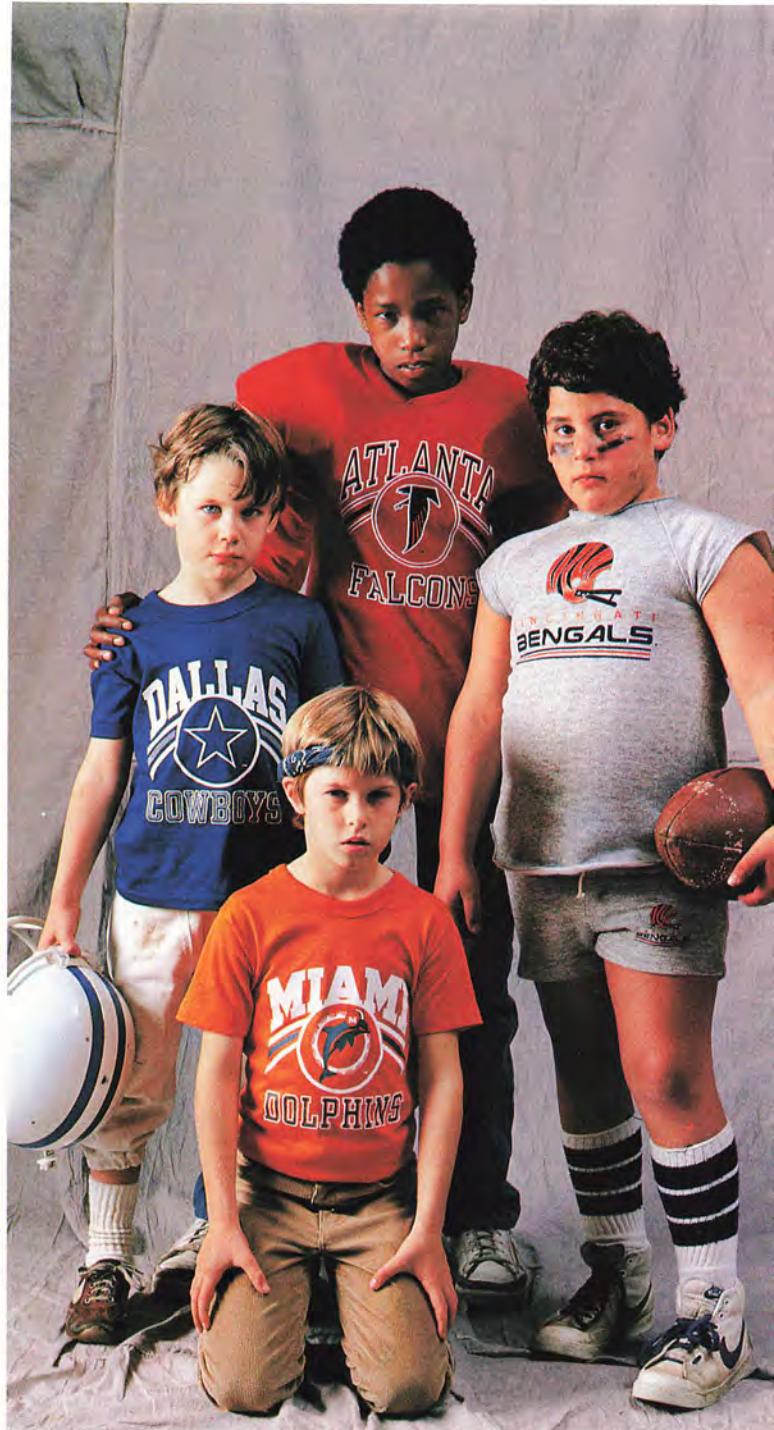
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## AUDIBLES

**Madden continued**

tice it against their sub-packages, which could include five, six, or seven defensive backs. And you also have to practice against the blitzes.

That's only one play to one side. You have to do the same thing with the play to the other side, the same thing with all your other plays.

On defense, you have to do the same thing. You have to work against all the offensive plays from your regular defense, then all of them from your short-yardage and goal-line defenses, all from inside the 20, all with their different combinations of substitutions. Also, don't forget the blitzing you have to work on.

So far, I've only mentioned offense and defense. You also have to practice special teams. And how long do you have to accomplish all this? Really only three days, because in a typical practice week, a team comes back on Monday, watches film, loosens up, then has Tuesday off. It works Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday on offense, defense, and special teams. Saturday is a light day, a review day.

As Landry says, there's so much to do, so many alignments, formations, and motion to prepare for, you don't have time to drill anymore. He says coaching these days isn't a matter of drilling until you reach consistent execution. It's a matter of putting out fires with strategy.

He says you put out one fire and another one starts. Watching the way football is going on the field this year, I can understand what he means. I'd say it's the big reason behind all the inconsistency we're seeing on the field.

Before we leave the subject I want to make a related point. It isn't only the teams that are inconsistent, it's also the officials. It seems like every game you see or read about, there's some controversy over an official's call.

I think it's all part of the same problem. Traditionally, officials were set and drilled and lined up to cover a standard offense and a standard defense. Now, with all the motion and multiplicity of formations, these guys are running all over. All they end up doing is putting out fires, just like the coaches. It's no wonder their calls are inconsistent.

The question is, what do you do about it? My suggestion is the same as it has been for years: full-time officials. The way it is now, NFL officials have their regular jobs during the week. They fly in on Saturday for their pregame meeting

and film review of last week's game, officiate the games on Sunday, then fly back so they're at their desks on Monday.

That may have been a good system once. But when a coach such as Tom Landry tells you the game has become too complicated for him to work at it full-time, I know it has become too complicated for officials working only two days a week.

**I GOT A QUESTION ON PASS PATTERNS** from Bob Spaide of Media, Pennsylvania. He wants to know about the relative advantages and disadvantages of "timing" patterns that teams like the San Diego Chargers use, and throwing after the break, the way the Raiders do it.

To answer that, let's go through some fundamentals of dropback passing. A right-handed quarterback will pull out with his right foot, then cross over with his left, then step with his right. Which means he can't plant on his even-numbered steps, or can't have a two-step, four-step, or six-step drop. It's got to be a three-, five-, or seven-step drop.

On the quickest passes in timing patterns, the quarterback just takes three steps, and, boom!, throws the ball. Less quick, five; less quick than that, seven. In those patterns, the receiver has a breaking point that corresponds to the quarterback's drop. At the breaking point, the quarterback has simultaneously finished his drop. He throws the ball knowing where the man is going to be.

When I coached, I never adopted that system, not because it doesn't work, but because I thought it was risky. The quarterback is throwing out there on the blind assumption the receiver is going to beat the defender. But if he doesn't, the defender is right there to intercept.

That's not to say it's a bad system. The teams that work it, such as San Diego and Washington, work it very well. They practice their timing until it's darn near second nature. It's also an advantage for pass protection. The pass blockers can get into the same rhythm as quarterbacks and receivers. They don't have to hold their blocks indefinitely.

But the way we did it at Oakland—the way the Raiders *still* do it—was to have the quarterback take a deep drop, about nine or ten yards. We'd have him hold the ball until after the receivers had made their breaks.

I think that system gives you a two-way advantage. Take an "out" pattern. The receiver runs up the field 15 yards

etc!

**“quote...”**

Washington Redskins linebacker **Neal Olkewicz**, on why the Redskins' defense has no nickname: "Because if things start going bad, people start going after the guys with the nicknames first."

New Orleans Saints head coach **Bum Phillips**, on his club's intensity during its opening-day victory over the St. Louis Cardinals: "There was one play where there was one tackle and ten assists, and it wasn't a penalty either. It was sort of like a gumbo cookoff. Everybody got there at the same time."

Los Angeles Raiders defensive end **Howie Long**, on the Los Angeles Coliseum public address announcer continually calling him "Huey Long" during an early season game: "It's bad enough being named Howie. Now they're trying to identify me as a guy who was assassinated. No thanks."

New England Patriots head coach **Ron Meyer**, asked to evaluate John Gillen, signed in midseason to fortify the Patriots' injury-ravaged linebacking corps: "To be honest with you, I don't know whether he's any good or not. He has a heartbeat and was walking the street."

Minnesota Vikings tight end **Dave Casper**, traded to the Vikings from the Houston Oilers in late September: "I'm glad to be here. I was looking up at the scoreboard here to find out the score. In Houston, I looked up at the scoreboard just to see how much time was left."

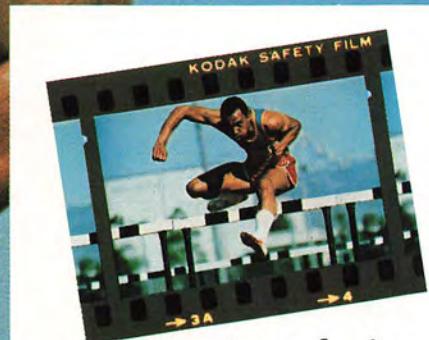
**...unquote”**

then cuts to the outside. He may beat his man making his cut. But if he doesn't, if he's still covered, then he has one more chance to get open—coming back toward the ball. By waiting, the quarterback lessens the chance of throwing into good man-to-man coverage.

If it's a zone pattern, he looks and waits for guys to work into the seams and holes in the zone. Conversely, a timing pattern against a zone defense is tough, because you're never sure where the zone defenders will be playing.

The big disadvantage of my system, however, was in pass protection. In the Raiders' scheme, the quarterback is going to hold the ball until someone works free. That sounds like a sensible approach. But that means the offensive linemen have to block a lot longer; they have to hold their blocks until the quar-

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**Madden continued**

terback finds someone. All of which puts a premium on the offensive line. Not every team has or has had the linemen who can make it work.

AND FINALLY, FROM BRIAN SPEAR IN Northridge, California, this question: "With all those potential receivers and all that motion in the 'Ace' formations, how are today's pro defenses setting up against it?"

The first way is, they're blitzing more. With the "Ace" or two-tight end formation, you only have one back in the backfield. On pass plays, that back blocks right, and his left side is susceptible. A lot of teams are blitzing more than one man from the side away from where he's blocking.

That's one thing. Defenses also are doing more stunting. Usually, they'll line a linebacker on the weakside tight end (the U-back or H-back—the one away from the normal tight end). Then they have the defensive end work outside, while the linebacker goes inside.

The next point doesn't exactly answer the question of how defenses set up against the "Ace." But it does highlight something the "Ace" formation is causing—the redefinition of the concept of weak safety/strong safety.

It used to be that the strong safety always lined up to the side of the one tight end. He was the bigger, stronger, slower, better-tackling, more physical defensive back, involved in stopping the run.

On the other side, lining up over the weakside tackle but deeper, was the weak safety, usually the smaller, quicker, faster guy, a center-fielder type.

Now, with the two-tight end formations, that kind of alignment is in trouble because the strong safety has to commit to one of the tight ends, which in turn tells the offense which side the defense is playing as the strong side. As a consequence, the offense can run away from the strong safety, to the side of the weak safety, who is off and deeper and not as physical as the strong safety.

Early in the season, the Rams played the Jets, mostly from their two-tight end "Ace" formation. Their whole approach that day was based on Eric Dickerson running away from the strong safety, Ken Schroy. If Schroy was lined up on the right, the Rams would run to the left, and vice versa. Dickerson gained 192 yards in 28 carries, so you can see there's merit in the plan.

PRO

***The Craftsmen***

# Where the Action Is

*Playing Strong Safety Never is Dull**By Bob Oates, Jr.*

DESPITE THE TREND TO AMALGAMATE the positions of strong and weak safety into one interchangeable position, there still are those who fit the prototype of the "strong safety."

The advent of the "Ace," or one-back, formation has caused the blending of the safety positions, but there still are teams not using the one-back sets. So the strong safety still exists.

The name has a purely technical origin. In football, the "strong side" of an offense is the side with the additional man, usually the tight end; thus the strong safety is the one who lines up opposite that strong side.

But the name describes the man who plays the position, as well. A strong safety does indeed have to be strong—strong of body and strong of heart. Of all the four relatively small defensive backs—two corners and two safeties—it is the strong safety who most frequently has to throw himself headlong into the path of power running plays.

Sidestepping definitely is not on the agenda.

"I love it," says Donnie Shell, a five-

time AFC Pro Bowl strong safety for the Pittsburgh Steelers. "Playing strong safety you get right into the action. You don't have to go looking for people to hit."

Shell's attitude reveals one requisite for the position: an eager predisposition to mix it up with the best and bulkiest. But kamikaze head-first-ism is not sufficient in itself. Football is refined kind of mayhem, and the strong safety always must keep his wits about him.

"We've all got a job to do," says New York Jets strong safety Ken Schroy. "You can't just run into people blindly. You have to take on the right man at the right spot so the rest of your teammates can count on you."

The strong safety usually lines up near the offense's tight end. If a running play starts anywhere in the direction of the tight end or wider, the strong safety most often has responsibility on the outside. His coming up to get into the fray is known as "run support," or more dramatically, "the force."

"The offense doesn't tell you what's coming," Shell says. "You've got to read



*"You don't have to go looking for people to hit," says Donnie Shell (31) of the Steelers.*

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Craftsmen *continued*

it. You've got about one second after the snap of the ball to figure out what's coming and get yourself moving."

The problem is that the strong safety usually has to worry about a pass play first. He can't afford even one wrong step forward, or a pass could get behind him. Yet to stop the running play successfully, he has to react as fast as he can.

"It takes practice," says Schroy, a big-play specialist on one of the league's most talented defensive units. "My read is the tight end through to the linemen and near back. If the tight end is blocking, especially blocking down [blocking to his inside] then I look for a pulling lineman. If one is coming, I'm gone. I've got to meet this play in the backfield."

If the tight end blocks, it's usually a running play. But offenses like to confuse people whenever they can.

"Maybe the tight end blocks down and the guard pulls," Shell says. "I've got a good run read. I charge up into the backfield. And then the tight end runs a 'sneak,' slipping out late to catch a pass."

When it's a run for real, speed is of the essence. The strong safety has to beat the play to the line of scrimmage. He has to take on the offensive backfield, sometimes two or three yards deep.

There are two different theories defining the strong safety's role when he gets to his spot. One is followed by Schroy.

"In our scheme," Schroy says, "my job is to force the play back inside. I want to pinch off that play as close to where it starts as possible. All my help is to the inside. If I let the guy get out around me, there is nobody there to make the play."

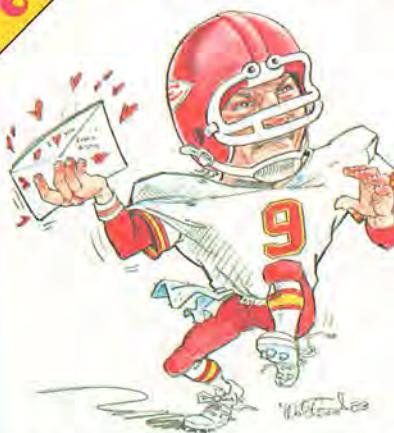
This is the concept of strong safety as outer limit. It's a fine theory, except that a 260-pound guard is coming full speed to bash that outer limit.

"The guy has sixty to eighty pounds on me," Schroy says. "But you can't back down. In fact, I try to go full speed right into him. I'll charge him as hard as I can, get down low, and go right through his outside leg. If you keep your head up and your arms reaching as you go through the man, sometimes you can even get a piece of the runner."

Tackling the runner, however, is not the strong safety's major concern. His aim is simply to take out the blocker and turn the play in—to create, as they say around the league, a "hard corner" that bounces the runner back into traffic. That tackle is made by people pursuing from the inside.

etc!

## Fan Mail, Good for Seven Yards



To the naked eye, the Kansas City Chiefs' 38-14 victory over the St. Louis Cardinals in week five of this season may have looked like a common blowout punctuated by a total of 15 turnovers by both teams (two shy of the NFL's highest

"It's not the most pleasant part of the job," Schroy says. "But it's not so bad if you can get to that blocker before he has a real head of steam up. I'll tell you this: If you stand there and wait for the guy to hit you, he's going to demolish you."

The strong safety as outer limit is not a universally admired concept, however. It's a question of how far out you mean by "outer."

"In the Steelers' system," Shell says, "it's not good enough just to turn the play in. A guy could stand clear out by the sidelines and say he was turning the play in. The runner has a thirty-yard hole to run through."

The Steelers don't ask Shell to contain every play that comes his way. What they want him to do, in essence, is to act as a counter-puncher.

"What we want to do," Shell says, "is make the runner do what he doesn't want to do. Let's say the play is *designed* to cut back inside of me. Then that's what I try to stop. I don't want him to get that quick cut right up inside of me—into the hole between me and my pursuit. If he cuts when he wants to right into the hole he wants to, it's just like he's running downhill. The pursuit will never catch him."

To stuff up that hole, the Steelers often line Shell up very close to the line—"four and four," as he calls it—four feet wide of the tight end and four feet back off the line.

"If that tight end blocks down," Shell says, "I'm coming right off his tail full

ever). There was one personal sidelight, however, that threw some warm postgame light on the bumbling festival.

Kay Dalton, the Houston Oilers' offensive coordinator, formerly an assistant with the Chiefs from 1978-1982, had given a note to Sandy Kenney, addressed to her husband, Chiefs quarterback Bill Kenney.

Mrs. Kenney watched as her Bill completed 11 of 22 passing attempts in the first half for 83 yards to help the Chiefs take a 14-7 lead at intermission. She figured this was the time to send the note.

Bill Kenney received it and read Dalton's words: "Throw the ball like the Bill Kenney I know."

"That really pumped me up," Kenney said afterward.

How much did it pump him up? In the second half, Kenney attempted 10 passes, completing 6 of them for 90 yards.

—T.B.

speed, angling into the backfield. I'm in close, right where the back wants to cut, and I hit the guard two or three yards in the backfield. I'm not only trying to stop the runner from cutting back, I'm trying to make him go out around me. I make a pile and he's got to run around it. He's got to take the great circle route, and he's wasting time. By the time he can get back to the line of scrimmage, the linemen and linebackers catch up to him."

In fact, Shell himself will sometimes catch up to him.

"A lot of times the blocker will try to cut me," he says, "going for my legs to chop me down. If he does that I just let him go ahead. But once I'm down, I don't just lie there. You can't just say, 'Oh, well, I'm down, that's it for this play.' I get up immediately. I mean right now. I chase the play for all I'm worth. By the time the runner gets straightened out, you can catch up to the play if you get yourself off the ground right away."

So some safeties turn the play in, and some bounce it out. But they all meet the business end of power running plays as a standard part of their professional routine.

"The strong safety plays like a defensive back part of the time," Schroy says. "But the rest of the time he's more like a linebacker. I can't really say I care for running into 260-pound guys, but it's part of the package. I've done it for years."

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Ten Years Ago

# The Year of 2,003

*Memories of O.J. and 1973**By Beau Riffenburgh*

FOR JOHNNY UNITAS AND WEEB EW-BANK, 1973 was the end. For Dan Fouts, Chuck Knox, and Don Coryell, it was the beginning. For O.J. Simpson, it was a launching pad to immortality.

Fifteen years before, 25-year-old Johnny Unitas had captured the fancy of the nation's football fans when he led coach Weeb Ewbank's Baltimore Colts to a 23-17 overtime victory against the New York Giants in the 1958 NFL Championship Game.

Unitas started 1973 in new surroundings, however. "He's just the guy to run the offense we want here," said the San Diego Chargers' head coach and general manager, Harland Svare, upon acquiring Unitas from the Colts. Unfortunately for both Unitas and Svare, he wasn't. A back injury rendered Unitas almost immobile, and he played in only five games. He spent the end of the season on the bench, watching rookie Dan Fouts guide the Chargers. Unitas, who held most major NFL career passing records at the time, went on to the Pro Football Hall of Fame; Fouts, with 30,000 career yards at the midpoint of the 1983 season, could challenge pro football's major career passing records in three or four years.

While Fouts learned the rudiments of the pro game under Svare, the man who later would help to make the Oregon product the leader of "Air Coryell" was getting his own pro start. Fresh from San Diego State, Don Coryell entered the NFL with the St. Louis Cardinals.

Coryell's impact was not felt immediately (his team had a 4-9-1 record, which matched its 1972 promise), but another new coach took the league by the horns and went 12-2 with a team that had been 6-7-1 in 1972. Chuck Knox, formerly an assistant with the Detroit Lions, guided the Los Angeles Rams to the first of five consecutive NFC Western Division titles.

Knox had broken into pro football under Weeb Ewbank, as an assistant with the New York Jets. Ewbank, the only man to win world championships in both the NFL and AFL, had left the

Colts after the 1962 season to join the Jets. Six years later he and his team were in Super Bowl III, facing a Colts team (15-1) that experts were calling the greatest of all time. The Colts were prohibitive favorites, but the Jets dominated 16-7 in an astonishing upset.

Ewbank's last year, 1973, wasn't as kind to him as 1958 or 1968 had been. The Jets finished 4-10, and his retirement, official after a 34-14 beating in the season finale by the Buffalo Bills, was overshadowed by O.J. Simpson.

In 1972, Simpson had shown the kind of ability that had prompted the Bills to make the Heisman Trophy winner from USC the first player chosen in the 1969 draft. O.J. had led the NFL in rushing in 1972 with 1,251 yards.

It became obvious early in 1973, however, that something really special was

possible. In the Bills' opening game against the New England Patriots, Simpson ran for an NFL single-game record 250 yards, including an 80-yard touchdown sprint that would be the longest run of the season in the NFL.

That was just the beginning. Simpson rushed for more than 100 yards in each of the first five weeks of the season.

Then in week seven, against the Kansas City Chiefs in a Monday night game, Simpson gained 157 yards on a record 39 carries. That pushed him over the 1,000-yard mark in only half a season.

The pace didn't slacken. Simpson had three more games with more than 100 yards, and, in the next-to-last week of the year, he ran for 219 yards to move within range of Jim Brown's NFL single-season record of 1,863 yards.

"Before the last game I was concentrating on the sixty-one yards I needed [to break the record]," O.J. says today. "It's something you knew would happen. But I don't think anyone except [Bills guard] Reggie McKenzie had visions of 2,000. He had mentioned it as far back as training camp."

On an icy, snow-covered turf at Shea Stadium, the Bills lost no time helping O.J. get the record. He carried on seven of the team's first eight plays, and, less



*Simpson on his history-making run to 2,003 against the Jets in the snow at Shea Stadium.*

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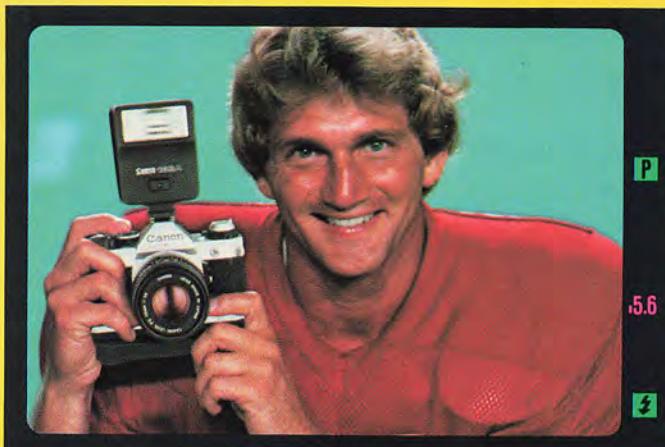
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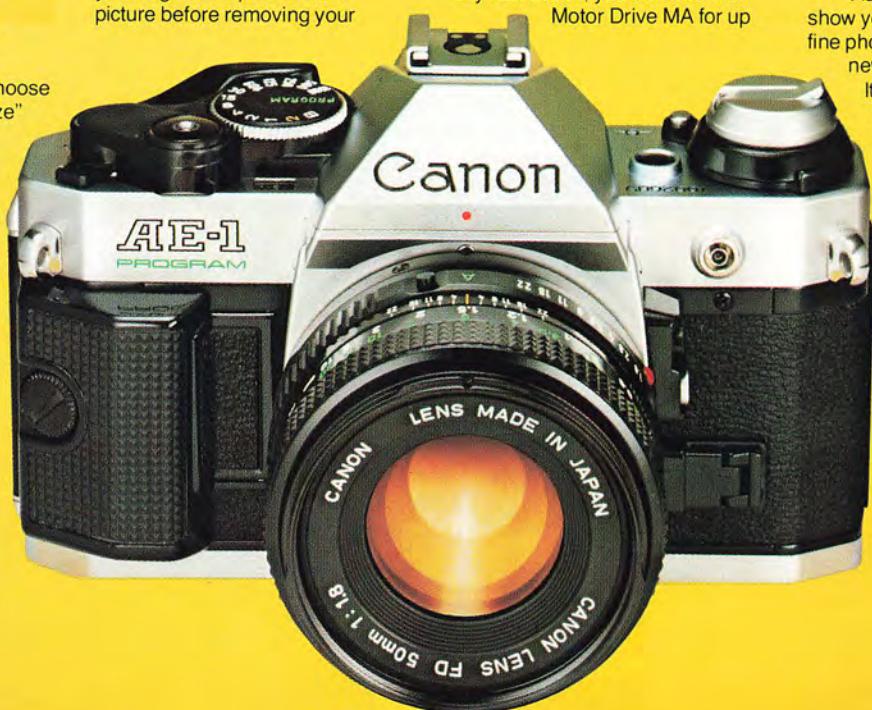
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Ten Years Ago *continued*

than nine minutes into the game, he trailed Brown by just three yards. On the team's second possession, the Juice charged six yards off tackle to break the record.

But Simpson kept on running, and the 2,000-yard barrier became a realistic target. With about six minutes to play, the Bills had the ball on the Jets' 25-yard line, and O.J. had 1,994 yards.

On second and five, Simpson slanted left behind blocks by McKenzie and Joe DeLamielleure. When he came down in the grasp of safety Phil Wise, O.J. had gained seven yards, for a total of 2,001. Coach Lou Saban promptly pulled Simpson, protecting the record.

It wasn't quite that simple, however.

"When I returned to Buffalo after the game, the telephone was ringing when I walked in," says Bills' vice president/public relations director Budd Thalman. "It was Seymour Siwoff, the NFL's statistical supervisor. He said he had found an error in O.J.'s rushing total.

"My heart sank. I had visions of pro football's first 2,000-yard man becoming pro football's first 1,999-yard man.

"But the mistake was in O.J.'s favor. The record rushing total had been improved to 2,003."

PRO

etc!

## Ready for the Fall Classic

When Cleveland Browns head coach Sam Rutigliano talks, linguists and folklorists listen. Two years ago, someone asked him before a game with Seattle whether he was concerned that Seahawks quarterback Jim Zorn was left-handed. His reply: "No, because all of our defensive backs are right-handed hitters."

In early October, Rutigliano was just hitting his midseason stride when he got off this mixed metaphorical tribute (complete with pun). When asked to describe his outside linebackers, Chip Banks and Clay Matthews, Rutigliano said:

"They are special people. If you had an Erector Set and wanted to make two linebackers, you'd make Clay and Chip. They both look like they've been chipped out of a Greek statue. They're making big plays for our defense. Keep in mind that Chip has only played in fourteen games and Clay was injured all last year and is now just getting back in the groove. For us, they're Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig. Chip and

IT'S RUBIC'S CUBE, THE PYTHAGOREAN Theorem, and Trigonometry 103 all rolled into one. Those without a background in astrophysics need not apply. But for all of you who have wondered exactly how the NFL passing rankings are computed, this one's for you.

Before we get into the fine print of the various formulas involved, a bit of history is in order. The current system was adopted in 1973, and, while it is certainly the most complex system the NFL has used to rate passers, it is by no means the only one. Individual passing statistics have been kept since 1932, the league's thirteenth season. Here are the previous methods used to determine the NFL's best passer:

- From 1932 through 1936, the passing leader was based solely on total yards.
- From 1937 through 1943, quarterbacks

## It Figures

# QBs by the Numbers

*Rating Passers Doesn't Always Figure*

By Steve Hirdt

were ranked from top to bottom in both completions and completion percentage. Their rank-numbers in the two categories were then added to produce final ranking points, by which the passing leader was determined. For example, if a player ranked first in completions and fourth in completion percentage, he would have five total ranking points. The quarterback with the *fewest* ranking points was number one.

- In 1944, the previous system was expanded to include four other categories: touchdowns, yards, interceptions, and interception percentage. Players were ranked in each category, and the sum of the ranking determined the leader, with the low score winning out again. This system lasted through 1948.
- For one season only, 1949, the 1944-48 system was modified by dropping one category (interception percentage).
- From 1950 through 1959, quarterbacks were ranked solely according to one category: average yards per pass.
- For the 1960-61 seasons, the multiple-category system was re-adopted. The categories were the same as those in the 1944-48 system, except that average yards per pass replaced interceptions.
- In 1962, two categories, completions and yards, were dropped, leaving a four-category system, based on completion percentage, touchdowns, interception percentage, and average yards per pass. This system remained through 1971.
- In 1972, touchdown percentage replaced touchdowns as a category.



Clay are going to be up most of the time with men on base and they've got to drive the runs in. And don't forget, we have Tom Cousineau and Dick Ambrose playing inside."

Of course he means Joe DiMaggio and Mickey Mantle. —T.B.

The system instituted in 1973 continues to rank individuals in the same four categories used in 1972: completion percentage, average yards per pass, interception percentage, and touchdown percentage. However, instead of rating the players against each other to determine the relative position of each player in each category, individuals are measured against a pre-determined standard that awards "preliminary rating points" to each passer. The better the performance

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### It Figures *continued*

in each category, the more rating points.

There were many problems with the earlier multiple-category, low-score-wins system. Because players were ranked according to their position within the group, everyone had to be re-ranked whenever the membership of the group changed. The career ratings of retired quarterbacks changed every year. One year, retired quarterback X might rank ahead of retired quarterback Y, only to find their positions reversed the following year. Also, it was possible for the overall league leader not to lead his own conference. And a passer's rating could change, even when he did not play in a game, because of the activity of the other quarterbacks. The previous system also was thought to be lacking in precision, in case one quarterback far surpassed another in a specific area. Consider the completion percentages compiled by these quarterbacks:

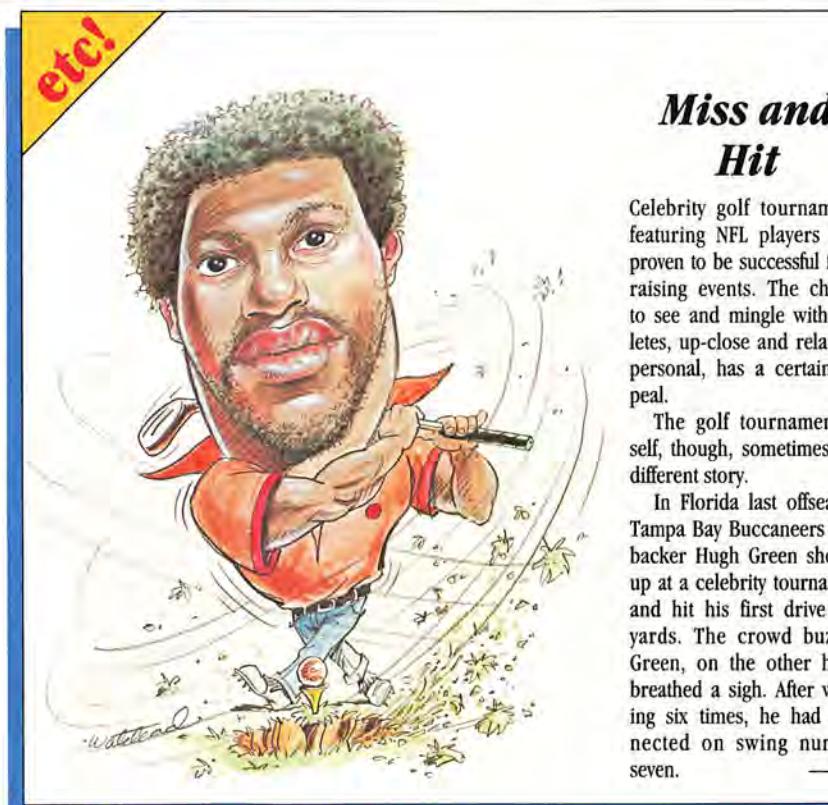
Dandy	68.3
Frank	55.7
Howard	55.5

Dandy's 68.3 is far better than Frank's 55.7, which is only slightly better than Howard's 55.5. But under the old system, Dandy would be awarded one point (for finishing first in the category), Frank two, and Howard three, meaning that the rating system took no account of relatively large (as between Dandy and Frank) or small (as between Frank and Howard) margins of difference between players' performances. Under the current system, however, rating points are awarded that, based on a broad evaluation of quarterback statistics, produce the following results: Dandy 1.915 points; Frank 1.285 points; Howard 1.275 points. Note here that Dandy's superior record is reflected in the margin of preliminary rating points awarded to him.

The preliminary rating points awarded in each of the four categories range from zero to 2.375. Why? We are not told this; some things must remain to be explained in the next life.

For example, a player completing less than 30 percent of his passes will receive no preliminary points; anyone completing 77.5 percent (or more) will receive the maximum of 2.375. There are corresponding limits in the three other critical categories as follows:

- Average yards per pass: no points awarded for three yards (or fewer) per pass; 2.375 points awarded for 12.5 (or more) yards per pass.



## Miss and Hit

Celebrity golf tournaments featuring NFL players have proven to be successful fund-raising events. The chance to see and mingle with athletes, up-close and relatively personal, has a certain appeal.

The golf tournament itself, though, sometimes is a different story.

In Florida last offseason, Tampa Bay Buccaneers linebacker Hugh Green showed up at a celebrity tournament and hit his first drive 300 yards. The crowd buzzed. Green, on the other hand, breathed a sigh. After whiffing six times, he had connected on swing number seven.

—T.B.

- Interception percentage: no points awarded for a rate of 9.5 interceptions (or more) per 100 passes; 2.375 points awarded when the player has thrown no interceptions, regardless of the number of passes.

- Touchdown percentage: 2.375 points awarded for a rate of 11.9 (or more) touchdowns per 100 passes; no points awarded when the player has thrown no touchdown passes, regardless of the number of passes he has thrown.

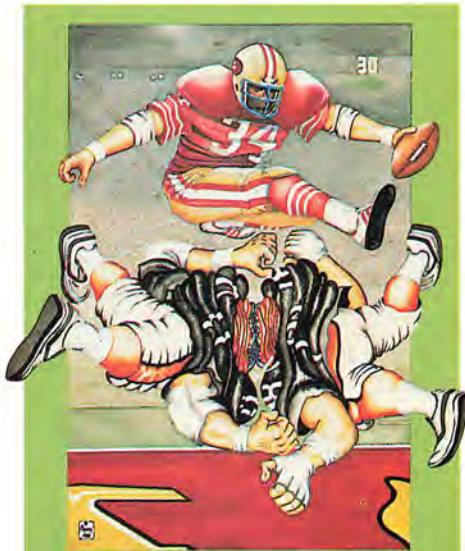
The official explanation of the rating system is printed in a 24-page booklet (complete with 16 pages of charts detailing the distribution of the preliminary rating points) issued by the league. In the text, there is a notation that to earn 2.000 preliminary rating points in any category, a quarterback must perform "to what amounts to an NFL record level," such as completing 70 percent of his passes or throwing for 10 touchdowns among every 100 passes. (The latter premise, incidentally, is incorrect; Sid Luckman of the Bears threw 28 touchdowns among his 202 passes in 1943, a rate of 13.9 per 100 passes.) The rest of the points are scaled on an exact arithmetic distribution, so that a player completing 70 percent of his passes receives 2.000 points, a player completing 60 percent gets 1.500 points, and a player completing 50 percent receives 1.000 points.

(This level, and the corresponding 1.000-point levels in the three other categories, are meant to reflect "average" levels of performance by a regular NFL quarterback, but they are slightly outdated. For example, a completion percentage of 50 percent may have been "average" in the 1960s, but the overall NFL completion percentage stood around 59 through the early weeks of the 1983 season.)

After each player is awarded preliminary points in each of the four categories, the points are added, then the sum is divided by 6.000 to produce a final rating. Why 6.000? The booklet says that this will create a 100-point scale against which passers will be measured. But that's not really the case. It actually creates a scale in which a player can achieve a rating as high as 158.3, and, although no one has come close to that over a full season, players occasionally achieve that temporary Nirvana by having an outstanding first game. But players sometimes have finished the season above 100.

Does the system accurately reflect the best passer in the league, and can it be improved? The answers, respectively, are maybe and certainly.

The matter of who is the NFL's best passer is one so loaded with subjective judgments that no mathematical system ever can be expected to appease every-



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### It Figures continued

one. Nor should it. For one thing, the only purpose that statistics ever should serve is as a signpost, pointing in the *direction* of the truth. Statistics themselves are not the ultimate story, but if properly compiled and presented, they should lend clarity to that story.

Statistics can be deceiving, however. Johnny Unitas played 18 seasons in the NFL, under five different rating systems, and never was the league's leading passer. Among those who beat him out were Tommy O'Connell, Ed Brown, Milt Plum, and Rudy Bukich.

Another thing to remember is that whatever the rating system involved, the purpose is to rate passing, not "quarterbacking." Qualities of leadership, play-calling, and running ability are important to the success of an NFL quarterback, but they are not considered in the rating system, nor should they be.

That brings us to how the system can be improved. In a way, all of the foregoing is an indication that a change should be made. Not too many systems that require a 24-page booklet and explanatory magazine articles are understandable to the typical NFL fan. And ease of understanding is as important to sports statistics as is correct data. Multiple regressions and X factors can be used to illustrate something, but what is the point when only a few could even comprehend what the methodology is?

To look for improvements, let's start at the top: Why is there a multi-category system in place to determine the passing leader, when similar systems (which would certainly be no more cumbersome than the passing system) are *not* used to rate rushers, pass receivers, and kick returners? Rushers are rated solely on yards gained rushing, pass receivers on passes caught, kick returners on average return. Certainly there are other factors to consider in each of these areas.

Also, the matter of assigning equal weight to each of the four categories extends overlapping credit to a passer who throws short, safe passes to his backs, because these passes automatically will improve (1) his completion percentage, because they nearly always are complete, and (2) his interception percentage, because they are virtually impossible to intercept. No matter that they may wind up as a loss of yardage; the quarterback still increases his preliminary points in both of these categories.

Interceptions also present a problem.

The theory on including them seems to be that a quarterback should be punished for losing the ball, but anyone who has watched NFL football has observed the following:

(1) Many interceptions are caused by a receiver's tipping a ball. These tips frequently occur on perfectly good passes, when the turnover is entirely the fault of the intended receiver;

(2) Quarterbacks frequently throw interceptions in the closing minutes of games that already are lost causes, when the fact of the interception means nothing in the overall context of the game;

(3) Interceptions thrown on the last play of the half mean absolutely nothing more than an incompletion.

The severe penalty that the rating system places on a player with a relatively high interception percentage is entirely inappropriate considering the fact that no distinction is made between interceptions that matter and those that do not. What magnifies the matter in the category of interception percentage is that the number of interceptions is so small—on the average, between four and five per 100 passes thrown. In this category, a little distortion goes a long way.

I believe the league should consider a return to the simpler days of yesteryear—the years from 1950 to 1959, to be exact. You will recall that in those seasons, the simple criterion of average-yards-per-pass determined the passing leader. It is clear to me that of the four categories upon which the current rating system is based, average-yards-per-pass stands out as by far the most meaningful. It gives a fair shake to the deep throwers while continuing to reward quarterbacks who have high completion percentages (because an incomplete or intercepted pass will reduce a passer's average). It would remove the distortions caused by the interception factor. And, perhaps most important, it would lend a measure of comprehension for the fans and media.

Considering that there have been several major changes in the playing rules during the past decade, and recognizing that there have been many different passing systems used by the NFL since 1932, there is nothing revolutionary about the ideas expressed here. It is important, however, to continue to press for improvements in the system, so that everyone will understand not only *who* is the leading passer in the NFL this season, but *why*.

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## END ZONE

### **Bills' Fans Lament Lack of Ink**

I recently subscribed to *PRO!* After three issues, I am upset already. Our whole family is Buffalo Bills fans. They are our home team and we love all of them. After looking through my three issues of *PRO!* and finding not even one little item, no less a large one, on the Buffalo Bills, I am ready to cancel my subscription.

Sharon Zajackowski  
Cheektowaga, New York

I subscribe to *PRO!* because I love to watch the Buffalo Bills. I was expecting to see something about my home team in *PRO!*. So far, I have seen nothing and this has been my second year. Please, at least put something in about my number-one quarterback, Joe Ferguson.

Donna Marie R. Jaszczak  
Buffalo, New York

(*EDITOR'S NOTE: See page 97 of the December, 1983, edition of PRO! for a story on Bills nose tackle Fred Smerlas. The February, 1983, edition, coming in a month, also will contain a story on the five Bills quarterbacks of 1968, which included Jack Kemp, Kay Stephenson, and Tom Flores. Regarding Joe Ferguson, see page 37 of this issue.*)

### **And a Different View From New England**

I know they stink, but they are my team. Please give a little ink to the New England Patriots.

Howard P. Defren  
Brockton, Massachusetts

### **No Two Ways About This Dilemma**

My question concerns Tom Landry, head coach of the Dallas Cowboys, and his ban on spiking the ball after his team scores a touchdown. I think he's all wrong. They should always have the right to celebrate after scoring. He says he'll fine or suspend any one of his players for spiking the ball, or if Butch Johnson does his "earthquake" dance. I

think Landry's getting too old. Maybe he just wants to get tough. Well, this is insane. He'll be right if the Cowboys win Super Bowl XVIII. But if they don't, they should fire him.

Kirk Jeffrey Cloud  
Danielson, Connecticut

### **Where, Oh Where, Is Walter Payton?**

I thought the feature in your November issue on "These Guys Drive Opponents Crazy" was great. What bothers me, is how could you do the article without at least including [Chicago running back] Walter Payton?

Robert Maynard, Jr.  
Glenview, Illinois

(*EDITOR'S NOTE: Payton was co-featured with Pittsburgh's Franco Harris in "Jim Brown Hears Footsteps," the cover feature in the October, 1983, issue.*)

### **An English NFL Fan Can't Wait for More**

I went to Wembley Stadium to see the Minnesota Vikings and St. Louis Cardinals and would like to thank both teams for a marvelous evening. It was a great game, so different than watching it on TV. For a fan of your great game to see it live for the first time was a great sporting moment in my life. The only thing wrong is that I must now wait a year to see another game—if the Global Cup is played again.

Mr. R. Taylor  
Essex, England

### **Montville's Computer Game Has a Fan**

Your November issue was great. I would like to congratulate Leigh Montville on his story on "The Computer Game." It was excellent. I liked how he analyzed the weaknesses of the Redskins' defensive and offensive units. I would like for him to try his computer again and name the three quarterback threats of the NFC and AFC.

Dwayne Hoffman  
Detroit, Michigan



**PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS:** Page 15—Dallas Times Herald, top (2); Corky Trewin, bottom (2). 19—Dick Raphael. 28-29—Peter Read Miller. 30—Peter Read Miller. 31—John Biever (3). 32—Peter Read Miller. 33—Peter Read Miller. 49—Vernon Biever. 51—John Biever. 53—John Biever. 55—John Biever. 57—John Biever. 59—Paul Jasienski. 60 (left to right)—Manny Rubio, Scott Cunningham, John Biever, Vernon Biever. 62-63—David Boss. 67—David Boss (2). 69—Michael Zagaris. 71—Bill Mount. 77—Ron Schribner (2). 81—Lou Witt. 82—Michael Bond. 93—George Gojkovich. 97—Tony Tomsic.

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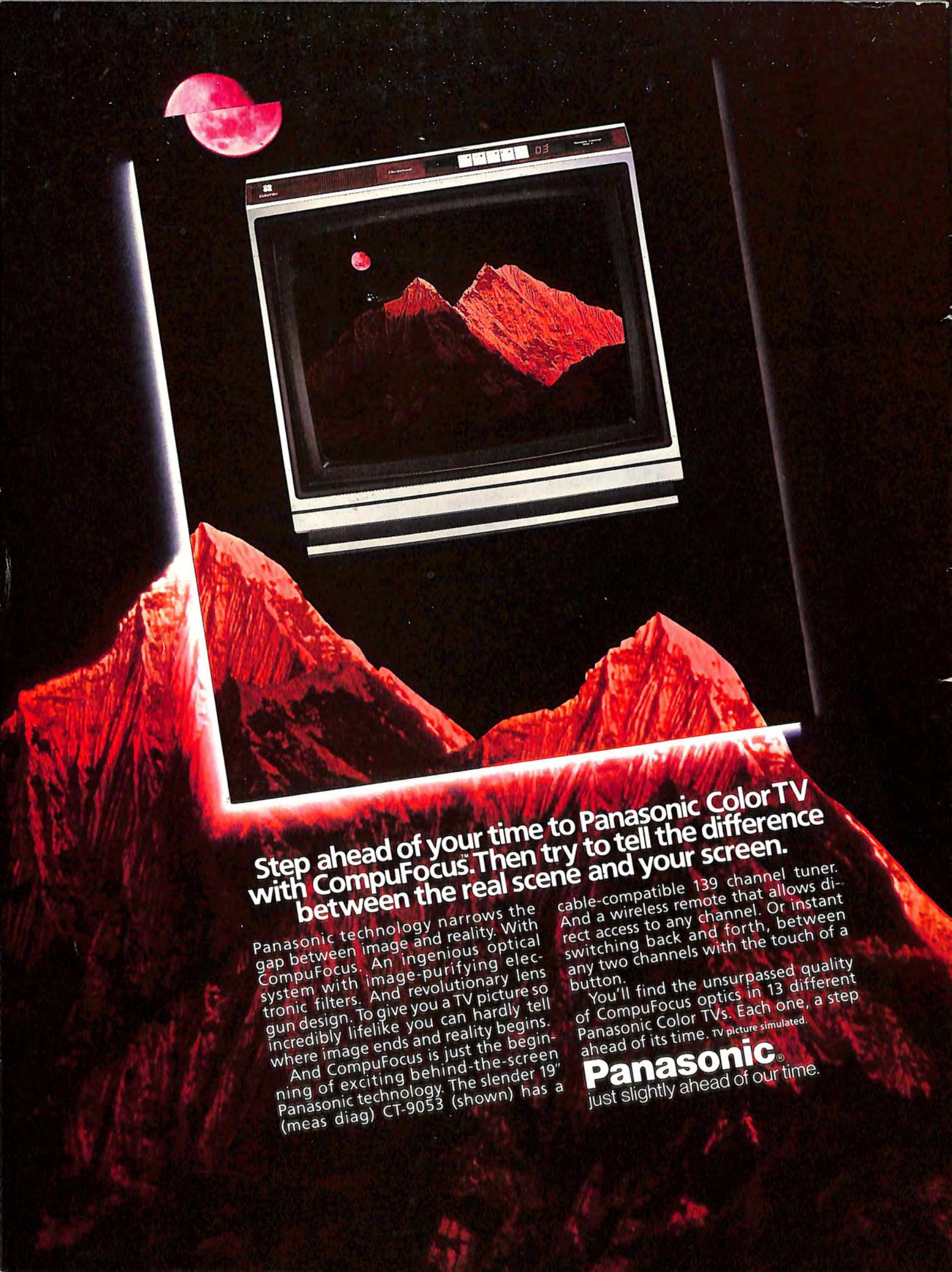
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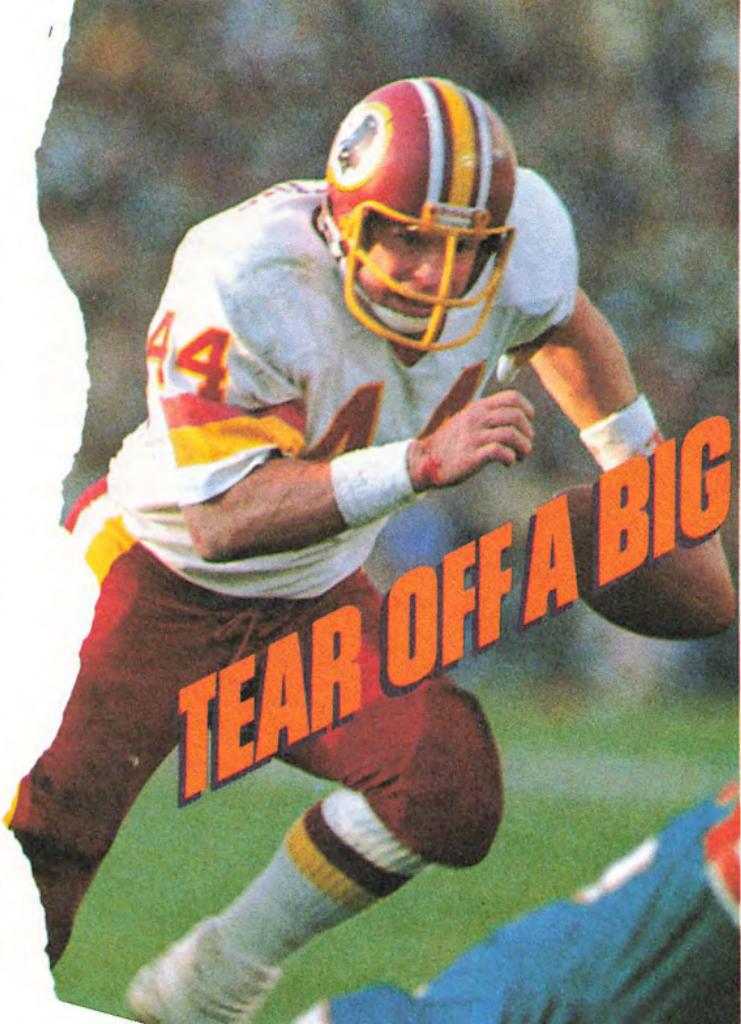
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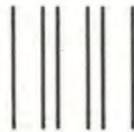
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